

# Non-Chinese Students' Perception on E-Learning in Enhancing Chinese Language Skills

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## Abstract

E-learning platform has emerged as an educational online environment for providing numerous advantages to language students. This study was conducted to explore the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing the four language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) of non-Chinese language students at the beginner level. To this end, a set of questionnaires were distributed to a total of 77 undergraduate students undertaking Chinese language as the third language course at the university. The study was carried out at a public university in Malaysia. The findings show that e-learning benefits the students in enhancing their Chinese language skills. Specifically, the students reported that e-learning benefits the most in enhancing their speaking skill ( $m=4.38$ ), followed by reading skill ( $m=4.20$ ), writing skill ( $m=3.95$ ) and listening comprehension skill ( $m=3.75$ ). The study provides empirical supports to the effectiveness of e-learning in language learning process particularly Chinese language learning at beginner level.

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**Keywords:** E-learning, Chinese language, Language skills, Students' Perception.

## INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, education system at the global level has undergone changes. Recent development in the field of e-learning for example has led to a renewed interest in education (Lee, Cheng, Rai & Depickere, 2005; Tsai, 2015). This new technological innovation platform has emerged into online educational environment for supporting the proposed advantages to learners in many fields (Li & Masters, 2009), especially in language, linguistic, teaching and learning. As indicated by Dawley (2007), e-learning encourages learners to seek information, evaluate it, share it, collaborate and ultimately, transform it into their own knowledge. Hence, e-learning is seen as an essential tool to enhance students' motivation to learn independently and interact more freely.

In Malaysia, awareness on the importance of e-learning and its potential has increased with various supports provided by the government. The support of infrastructures where some of the tangible strategies are always provided, especially to the local universities. As a result, many Malaysian undergraduates now begin to adapt their learning styles in this digital era, particularly by accessing and enriching their academic knowledge through e-education.

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Besides that, Chinese syllabus implemented in Malaysia is unique, carried out as ‘regardless of teaching skills’ proposed by Zhou (2010), with the objective of describing the teaching methodology integrated with all language skills. As a details, it is indicated that the teaching of Chinese language in Malaysia focuses more on communication and interaction. However, there is no over emphasis on any particular skills. It seems different with the Chinese language teaching in China, as they focus on the four language skills respectively, such as speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

Hence, there is a need of e-learning course to demonstrate meticulously selected sets of Chinese language pronunciation, vocabulary, phrases, grammar, and characters, which need to be categorized into lessons, to help students start learning how to speak basic Chinese language in a short period of time. Thus, taking into account the potential benefits and advantages of e-learning platform which students could obtain in their learning process, the present study aims to explore the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing non-Chinese students’ language skills particularly in their Chinese language learning. This is considering the fact that there is hardly any study conducted to examine students’ perception towards the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing their Chinese language skills. Specifically, the present study intends to investigate non-Chinese students’ perceptions on how much they think e-learning could enhance their reading, listening comprehension, writing as well as speaking skills. In doing so, the following two research questions are addressed in the study.

1. What is the importance of e-learning in enhancing students’ language skills?
2. What is the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students’ listening comprehension skills, speaking skills, reading skills and writing skills?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Definition of e-Learning

The term ‘e-learning’ has been defined by many scholars in their studies. Rosenberg (2001) proposes that e-learning as the “use of Internet technologies to deliver a broad array of solutions that enhance knowledge and performance” (Rosenberg, 2001, p. 28). Meanwhile, Horton (2006) views e-learning as the platform of building up “learning experiences of information and computer technology” (Horton, 2006, p.1). Using it in a broad concept, Graham (2006) defines it as learning systems that “combine face-to face instruction with computer mediated instruction” (Graham, 2006, p.5). According to Waterhouse (2003), e-learning is defined as “a medium of computer technology” (Waterhouse, 2003, p.1) which could be utilized to develop the application of teaching and learning.

In view of this, it is important to note that the most scholars share the same view, in which they agree with the fact that e-learning involves the use of computer technology and its innovations to enhance teaching and learning. In other words, e-learning is the delivery of a teaching program by electronic means that includes digital collaboration, virtual classroom, web-based learning and delivery of content through Internet. It can be also illustrated as the combination of face-to-face learning with a teacher, in blended learning (Atef & Medhat, 2015). For example, a student can choose to join an online language skill program which includes listening, reading, speaking and writing activities over the web. The teacher may be the tutor to monitor the students’ learning progress, organize the speaking session and mark their written work. On the other hand, blended learning program in the classroom can involve the face-to-face class time that used to clear up organizational problems to emphasis on speaking skills, and provide an opportunity to help students to build a good class dynamic between group members. In the following section, existing studies on e-learning are reviewed to provide the rationales for the present study.

### 2.2 Previous Studies on e-Learning in Language Pedagogies

According to several studies (e.g. Banditvilai, 2016; Soliman, 2014; Larsen, 2012; Tsai, 2011a, 2011b), e-learning provides significant opportunities in lending itself to the fulfilment of teaching pedagogies, and improving student learning in a blended learning environment. For instance, the findings of Soliman (2014)

study in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment revealed that the implementation of e-learning in classrooms encourages development in students' language skills and activate their independent learning. With the use of e-education framework, the finding of Tsai (2011a, 2011b) identified that students are provided with opportunities to enhance their studies by accessing knowledge from every part of the world through digital learning process.

Similarly, Larsen (2012) study indicated that e-learning has improved students' perception on their ESL writing skills. Students were found to work more autonomously and focused while becoming more responsible for their own learning. This enabled the teachers to better provide personalized assistance, keep better track of student progress, and cover more materials. Moreover, the study of Banditvilai (2016) found that online practice is directly beneficial to enhance students' listening, reading, writing and speaking skills, autonomous learning as well as motivation. In brief, these studies lend support to the significance of e-learning as an essential tool to enhance students' language proficiency, improve students' success as well as promote independent and productive learning.

The studies in western context discussed above were mostly focused on the investigation about students' perceptions on e-learning in language pedagogies (Banditvilai, 2016; Soliman, 2014; Larsen, 2012; Tsai, 2011a, 2011b). However, a lack in such studies is identified in the Malaysian context since most of the Malaysian scholars mostly focused on e-learning in English (Al-rahmi, Othman & Yusuf, 2015, Kabilan, Mohamad, & Abidin, 2010, Yahya, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap in the literature in the area of e-learning in foreign language study in Malaysia, especially in Chinese language. This is because e-learning in foreign language teaching and learning is seen as an important tool that needs to be considered further.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Respondents**

The respondents in this study are undergraduate students (n=77) who undertake the beginner level of Chinese language as foreign language e-learning course at a public university in Malaysia. The respondents consist of 66 females and 11 males. The majority of the students are Malay (n=57), followed by Indians (n=15) and other races (n=5) students. The respondents are of a homogeneous group as they are of the age of 21, have no experience in Chinese language learning background, and enrolled in Chinese language course in the first semester of the 2017-2018 academic year.

### **3.2 e-learning Lessons**

The Chinese language e-learning course was first launched in the first semester of the academic year 2017-2018, and it still stands on a trial period at this moment. There are two main components which have been developed into these e-learning lessons, specifically contents and learning activities components.

The main contents of each module in e-learning lessons are based on the Level One Chinese language textbooks written by the Chinese language lecturers. This level is aimed to introduce the students to vocabulary, conversational phrases and grammar items that are used in daily conversations. The contents of the instructional video for beginner level which contains 14 modules, are clustered into three parts: (1) three lessons in the beginning focus on the pronunciation learning comprising of the introduction of initials, finals and tones; (2) ten lessons in the next have each different learning themes, which abbreviate explanation, funny animations, instructor's voice-over and refreshing music, and all of these are presented through the illustration of Powtoon and (3) one lesson at the end as a summary for the whole lessons.

The learning activities for each module are divided into three parts: (1) quizzes; (2) exercises and (3) feedback. Quizzes are used to test students' knowledge by using amusing online activities that could trigger learners' attention and interest. Exercises are used to assess students' core competencies during their learning process. The development of quizzes and exercises are aimed at consolidating and reinforcing the students' four language skills, which included listening comprehension, reading, writing and speaking. Students who

participated in this e-learning course are required to assess their four skills through these learning activities. A platform for giving feedback is also provided to help solve the students' problem and fulfill their needs in learning the Chinese language.

In short, through the Chinese language e-learning course which launched in the first semester of the academic year 2017-2018, two main components which have comprised of contents and learning activities components, are initially tried to lend support to the significance of e-learning in enhancing students' listening, reading, writing and speaking skills, as an additional support to the Mandarin textbook used. It would hope to give further support and help to non-Chinese students in order to improve their learning skills, strengthen their achievement as well as to promote their independent and productive learning.

### 3.3 Instrument

A questionnaire was developed on the basis of foreign language skills preferences which is selected in the foreign language learning need analysis (Wan Aziz et.al, 2018). The questionnaire was adopted because it is relevant to the objectives of this study with some amendments to some items to suit the present study.

Consequently, the questionnaire was divided into 2 sections. Section one inquires the demographic background of the respondents, such as age, gender, ethnicity and faculty. Sections two consists of five elements to explore the students' perceptions regarding the application of e-learning in enhancing their language skills while undertaking the Chinese language course. The five elements which explore the students' perceptions are (1) the importance of e-learning in four skills; (2) the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students' listening comprehension skills; (3) the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students' speaking skills; (4) the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing student' reading skills; and (5) the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students' writing skills. Each section uses Likert-type scale as well as ranking to further investigate the students' perceptions. Likert scale consists of items from 1=the least; 2=less; 3=average; 4=more; 5=the most, while the ranking consists of items from 1= the least until 5=the most.

### 3.4 Research Procedures and Data Analysis

Questionnaire was administered to respondents in week thirteen of the September semester, 2017/2018. The completion of the questionnaire took approximately 15-20 minutes and they were immediately collected, so the return rate is 100%. The data obtained from the questionnaire were then coded for statistical analysis, and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 20.0) was used to analyze the data. The descriptive analysis was run in finding the results of the study. The data obtained was then conceptualized in the forms of tables and the results of the study were noted quantitatively.

## FINDINGS

### 4.1 What is the Importance of e-learning in Enhancing Students' Language Skills?

To investigate the importance of e-learning in enhancing students' four language skills, the data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 presents the students' perception on the importance of e-learning in enhancing their four language skills specifically in listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing. According to the findings, 35.1% of the students agreed that e-learning is 'more important' in enhancing their listening comprehension skills. Meanwhile 27.3% of the respondents respectively chose 'average important' and 'most important' in their perceptions of the importance of e-learning in enhancing their listening comprehension. From the students' perception in enhancing their Mandarin speaking skill, majority of the students (53.2%) stated that e-learning is 'most important' for them. The result of 'most important' is similar with the perception of the students in the view of enhancing their reading skill. Specifically, there are 36 students who responded that e-learning is the 'most important' in enhancing their reading skills (46.8%). In the point of view for enhancing writing skills, the answer of 'more important' and 'most important' are chosen by 26 (33.8%) students and 25 (32.5%) students respectively.

**Table 1.** The Importance of e-learning in Enhancing Students' Language Skills (n=77).

| <b>Mandarin Language Skills</b> | <b>Least (%)</b> | <b>Less (%)</b> | <b>Average (%)</b> | <b>More (%)</b> | <b>Most (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Listening Comprehension         | 1 (1.3)          | 7 (9.1)         | 21 (27.3)          | 27 (35.1)       | 21 (27.3)       |
| Speaking                        |                  | 1 (1.3)         | 10 (13.0)          | 25 (32.5)       | 41 (53.2)       |
| Reading                         |                  | 4 (5.2)         | 12 (15.6)          | 25 (32.5)       | 36 (46.8)       |
| Writing                         |                  | 3 (3.9)         | 23 (29.9)          | 26 (33.8)       | 25 (32.5)       |

Table 2 shows that speaking skill is ranked the highest (M=4.38, SD=0.96) followed by reading (M=4.20, SD=0.89), writing (M=3.95, SD=0.89) and listening comprehension (M=3.75, SD=0.76). These results clearly indicate that the Mandarin e-learning course is important to the students in the way that it enhances their listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing skills.

**Table 2.** Means and Standard Deviations of e-learning Importance in Enhancing Language Skills.

| <b>Mandarin Language Skills</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Listening Comprehension         | 3.78        | 0.96      |
| Speaking                        | 4.38        | 0.76      |
| Reading                         | 4.20        | 0.89      |
| Writing                         | 3.95        | 0.89      |

#### 4.2 What is the Usefulness of e-learning in Enhancing Listening Comprehension, Speaking, Reading and Writing Skills?

In order to examine the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students' listening comprehension skills, we performed the results of data analysis using descriptive statistics. The results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** The Usefulness of e-Learning in Enhancing Students' Listening Comprehension Skills.

| <b>Listening Comprehension Skills</b>                        | <b>Least (%)</b> | <b>Less (%)</b> | <b>Average (%)</b> | <b>More (%)</b> | <b>Most (%)</b> |
|--|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Ability to understand lecturers in order to take notes       | -                | 2 (2.6)         | 20 (26.0)          | 27 (35.1)       | 28 (36.4)       |
| Ability to understand speakers intention                     | -                | 3 (3.9)         | 20 (26.0)          | 33 (42.9)       | 21 (27.3)       |
| Ability to follow and understand classroom discussion        | -                | 1 (1.3)         | 15 (14.5)          | 33 (42.9)       | 28 (36.4)       |
| Ability to understand questions raised during class activity | -                | 1 (1.3)         | 17 (22.1)          | 31 (40.3)       | 26 (33.8)       |

Table 3 depicts students' point of view on the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing their four listening comprehension sub-skills which include the 'ability to understand lecturers in order to take notes', 'ability to understand speakers' intention', 'ability to follow and understand classroom discussion', and 'ability to understand questions raised during class activity'. From the view of 'ability to understand lecturers in order

to take notes’, majority of the students (36.4%) agreed on the usefulness of this platform in developing their listening comprehension skills. Meanwhile, 42.9% of the students, 42.9% and 40.3% of students chose ‘more agree’ for the ‘ability to understand speakers intention’, ‘ability to follow and understand classroom discussion’, and ‘ability to understand questions raised during class activity’ respectively. Interestingly, the second rank for the usefulness in developing listening comprehension skills in these three views are the same since 21 (27.3%), 28 (36.4%) and 26 (33.8%) students chose ‘most agree’.

**Table 4.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Usefulness of e-learning in Enhancing Students’ Listening Comprehension skills.

| Listening Comprehension Skills                               | Mean | SD   |
|--|------|------|
| Ability to understand lecturers in order to take notes       | 4.05 | 0.86 |
| Ability to understand speakers intention                     | 3.94 | 0.83 |
| Ability to follow and understand classroom discussion        | 4.14 | 0.77 |
| Ability to understand questions raised during class activity | 4.09 | 0.79 |

The mean score and standard deviation in Table 4 indicate the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students’ listening comprehension skills. The ‘ability to follow and understand classroom discussion’ is ranked the highest (M=4.14, SD=0.77) followed by ‘ability to understand questions raised during class activity’ (M=4.09, SD=0.79) and ‘ability to understand lecturers in order to take notes’ (M=4.05, SD=0.86). The view of ‘ability to understand speakers’ intention’ is ranked the lowest (M=3.94, SD=0.83).

As to finding out the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students’ speaking skills, we performed the results of percentage, mean and standard deviation of descriptive analysis in this study. The details are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** The Usefulness of e-Learning in Enhancing Students’ Speaking Skills.

| Speaking Skills                                    | Least (%) | Less (%) | Average (%) | More (%)  | Most (%)  |
|--|-----------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Ability to interact in a social conversation       | -         | 4 (5.2)  | 20 (26.0)   | 34 (44.2) | 19 (24.7) |
| Ability to give or pass information and suggestion | -         | 3 (3.9)  | 30 (39.0)   | 27 (35.1) | 17 (22.1) |
| Ability to speak intelligibly clearly              | -         | 5 (6.5)  | 29 (37.7)   | 23 (29.9) | 19 (24.7) |
| Ability to ask for information                     | -         | 5 (6.5)  | 23 (29.9)   | 30 (39.0) | 18 (23.4) |

Referring to Table 5, the perceptions of students about the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing speaking skills would be discussed. Four speaking sub-skills are used for measurement. They are ‘ability to interact in a social conversation’, ‘ability to give or pass information and suggestion’, ‘ability to speak intelligibly and clearly’, and ‘ability to ask information’. 44.2% of the students agreed that e-learning is useful in building their ‘ability to interact in a social conversation’. The result is similar to the ‘ability to ask information’, the highest ranking also was ‘more agree’ (39%). While for the speaking sub-skills of ‘ability to give or pass information and suggestion’ and ‘ability to speak intelligibly and clearly’, 30 (39%) and 29 (37.7%) of the students chose ‘average’. Table 5 shows that the four speaking sub-skills are not the ‘most useful’ for students learning through this digital use.

**Table 6.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Usefulness of e-learning in Enhancing Students' Speaking Skills.

| Speaking Skills                                    | Mean | SD   |
|--|------|------|
| Ability to interact in a social conversation       | 3.88 | 0.85 |
| Ability to give or pass information and suggestion | 3.75 | 0.85 |
| Ability to speak intelligibly clearly              | 3.74 | 0.92 |
| Ability to ask for information                     | 3.80 | 0.88 |

Table 6 indicates the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students' speaking skills in terms of the mean score and standard deviation. The means of all the four speaking sub-skills which consist of the 'ability to interact in a social conversation', 'ability to give or pass information and suggestion', 'ability to speak intelligibly and clearly', and 'ability to ask information' are 3.88, 3.75, 3.74 and 3.80 respectively. This result shows that the development of speaking skills through the use of e-learning still needs to be improved as to further enhance the students' speaking skills in the future.

In aiming to investigate the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students' reading skills, we performed the results of percentage, mean and standard deviation of descriptive analysis in this study. The results are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7.** The Usefulness of e-Learning in Enhancing Students' Reading Skills.

| Reading Skills                                  | Least (%) | Less (%) | Average (%) | More (%)  | Most (%)  |
|---|-----------|----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| Ability to skim and scan the text               | -         | 5 (6.5)  | 21 (27.3)   | 35 (45.5) | 16 (20.8) |
| Ability to get the meaning of word from context | 1 (1.3)   | 4 (5.2)  | 23 (29.9)   | 31 (40.3) | 18 (23.4) |
| Ability to understand synonym and antonym       | -         | 10 (6.5) | 29 (37.7)   | 27 (35.1) | 11 (14.3) |
| Ability to infer conclusion                     | -         | 8 (10.4) | 26 (33.8)   | 31 (40.3) | 11 (14.3) |
| Ability to evaluate the text                    | 1 (1.3)   | 5 (6.5)  | 28 (36.4)   | 28 (36.4) | 15 (19.5) |

In the above Table 7, the results of five reading sub-skills which included 'ability to skim and scan the text', 'ability to get the meaning of word from context', 'ability to understand synonym and antonym', 'ability to infer conclusion' and 'ability to evaluate the text' through the use of e-learning are presented. Majority of the students 'more agree' of the usefulness of e-learning in building the 'ability to skim and scan text', 'ability to get the meaning of word from context' and 'ability to infer conclusion'. Meanwhile there are 29 students who ranked the highest for 'averagely agree' with the usefulness of e-learning in building up the 'ability to understand synonym and antonym' (37.7%). For the results of 'ability to evaluate the text', the number of respondents (36.4%) who chose 'more useful' and 'average useful' is the same. Similar with the results of the speaking sub-skills in Table 5, Table 7 also demonstrated that these five reading sub-skills are not the 'most useful' for the students in learning the Mandarin language through e-learning.

From the results in Table 8, there are almost similar results with the result of speaking skills from Table 6. Both tables clearly indicate that the mean of all the sub-skills were less than 4. For instance, the mean for 'ability to skim and scan the text' is 3.80, the mean for 'ability to get the meaning of word from context' is 3.79, the mean for 'ability to understand synonym and antonym' is 3.50, the mean for 'ability to infer conclusion' is 3.59, and the mean for 'ability to evaluate the text' is 3.66. This result revealed that the

development of reading skills in the use of e-learning, also face the same problem, may need to be improved to suit for the further use.

**Table 8.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Usefulness of e-learning in Enhancing Students' Reading Skills.

| Reading Skills                                  | Mean | SD   |
|---|------|------|
| Ability to skim and scan the text               | 3.80 | 0.84 |
| Ability to get the meaning of word from context | 3.79 | 0.91 |
| Ability to understand synonym and antonym       | 3.50 | 0.90 |
| Ability to infer conclusion                     | 3.59 | 0.87 |
| Ability to evaluate the text                    | 3.66 | 0.91 |

The results of Table 9 are tried to illustrate the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students' writing skills, we performed the results of percentage, mean and standard deviation of descriptive analysis in this study. The details as shown below.

**Table 9.** The Usefulness of e-Learning in Enhancing Students' Writing Skills.

| Writing Skills                          | Least   | Less     | Average   | More      | Most      |
|---|---------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|   | (%)     | (%)      | (%)       | (%)       | (%)       |
| Ability write, summarize and paraphrase | -       | 5 (6.5)  | 21 (27.3) | 35 (45.5) | 16 (20.8) |
| Ability to sequence idea                | 1 (1.3) | 4 (5.2)  | 23 (29.9) | 31 (40.3) | 18 (23.4) |
| Ability to use rules of grammar         | -       | 10 (6.5) | 29 (37.7) | 27 (35.1) | 11 (14.3) |
| Ability to use punctuation              | -       | 8 (10.4) | 26 (33.8) | 31 (40.3) | 11 (14.3) |

Based on Table 9, it is found that the four ability of writing skills towards e-learning which included 'ability to write, summarize and paraphrase', 'ability to sequence idea', 'ability to use rules of grammar' and 'ability to use punctuation' are not the 'most useful' from the view of 77 the students. The situation is same with the view of students in the speaking and reading sub-skills. The highest ranking of writing skills is 'ability to use punctuation' where 40.3% of the students agreed that it is 'more useful' in their e-learning. Whereas from the views of 'ability to write, summarize and paraphrase' and 'ability to use rules of grammar', 'average useful' is the majority answer chosen by 40.3% and 42.9% of the students respectively. For those agree for the 'ability to sequence idea', the number of students who chose 'more useful' and 'average useful' is same, which is 30 (39%).

**Table 10.** Means and Standard Deviations of the Usefulness of e-learning in Enhancing Students' Writing Skills.

| Writing Skills                          | Mean | SD   |
|---|------|------|
| Ability write, summarize and paraphrase | 3.63 | 0.84 |
| Ability to sequence idea                | 3.62 | 0.86 |
| Ability to use rules of grammar         | 3.44 | 0.93 |
| Ability to use punctuation              | 3.61 | 0.98 |

Table 10 presents the usefulness of e-learning in enhancing students' writing skills in terms of mean score and standard deviation. On average, all the means of the four writing sub-skills which comprised of the 'ability to write, summarize and paraphrase', 'ability to sequence idea', 'ability to use rules of grammar' and 'ability to use punctuation' are similarly less than 4. Specifically, the means are 3.63, 3.62, 3.44 and 3.61 respectively. This result shows that the situation of writing skills towards the use of e-learning is similar with the situation of speaking and reading skills, where they need to be improved in order to enhance the students' language skills through the implementation of blended learning.

## DISCUSSION

First of all, the findings show that the use of this Chinese language e-learning platform from the perceptions of students, in the way of assessing their four language skills - listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing, are still not yet the 'most useful' for them. This is because the activities in e-learning are still at the preliminary stage for developing their comprehension and understanding especially in communicative skills. Hence, this finding reflects the feelings of dissatisfaction from most of the students towards the learning activities in this platform (Neuhauser, 2002). It has shown a significant need to improve and enhance the assessment of each language skill by providing more of effective and interesting learning activities. As stated by Esteves, Fonseca, Morgado and Micaela (2011), new technologies have changed the learning and teaching method by bringing in new opportunities to educational activities. Thus, the e-learning platform should be developed and incorporated with multiple tools that are more advanced and interactive to mediate the students' learning experience.

Despite their dissatisfaction to the content of the e-learning platform, the importance of e-learning platform in the Chinese language course to enhance students' language skills at least in the perspectives of the students is not to be denied. As shown by the findings obtained, majority of the students agree that e-learning platform in Chinese language learning benefits them a lot in improving and enhancing their four language skills (writing, reading, listening and speaking). This is due to some of the characteristics of e-learning: easy access, ability in building students' learning experience and motivation, and focusing on "interaction" and "practice" in the process of learning.

For the characteristic of internet easy access, Stalker and Horn (2012) stressed that students can learn at least in part through online delivery of content and instruction. He also mentioned that students have some level of control over time, place, path, and/or pace of instruction. The easy access of e-learning also eases the teachers' teaching, where they could deliver their lesson or instruction and monitor students away from home in a supervised location (Stalker & Horn, 2012; Atef and Medhat, 2015). Due to the easy access of internet, it makes teaching and learning to become spontaneous, informal, personalized and ubiquitous (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012).

Due to the ubiquitous characteristic of e-learning also, it helps in building students' learning experience and learning motivation. This is because the built experience is related to students' previous relevant work experience and online experience that determine the type of attitude injected in students' learning motivation. Hence, these experiences may cause increment and decrement in students' learning motivation (Noesgaard & Ørngreen, 2015). For further explanation, if the students' previous experience with a variety of e-learning solution that make them unimpressed, their learning motivation will decrease. In contrary, if the students' previous experience with a variety of e-learning solution that makes them impressed, their learning motivation will increase. This phenomenon is supported by Jung, Choi, Lim and Leem (2012), who stated that the usage of e-learning context can build positive learning experience by having social interaction with instructors and collaborative interaction with peer students, are view as important point in enhancing and active participation in online discussion.

Furthermore, the characteristic of e-learning is also focused on the context of "interaction" and "practice" in the process of learning. For the context of "interaction", the e-learning is considered to have equally or better effect than face-to-face learning in classroom, this is because "interaction" in e-learning includes "instructional scaffolding", "modeling" and "support". Hence, previous research shows that students had a better success rate in instructor-led e-learning than in independent study e-learning. This situation is

supported by Jiang, Parent and Eastmond (2006) that there is a need of modeling and scaffolding to be successful in e-learning environment. Therefore, the results indicated that teachers attributed enhanced students' learning to technology use; online communication with peers and instructors could reduce teacher isolation, improved professional practice (Hawkes & Good, 2000; cited in Noesgaard & Ørngreen, 2015). On the other hand, for the context of "practice", students of e-learning are also given opportunity or are required to "practice" the educational material presented. The practice is aimed to support learning retention and transfer to practice, as simulated practice provides a real learning environment before the skills are applied in real life situation (Alinier, Hunt, Gordon & Harwood, 2006).

In short, e-learning is considered a new solution to bridge the inequality gap in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. This opens up a new direction in teaching Chinese as a foreign language where teachers should be getting involved in more e-learning approach rather than depending fully on traditional methods in teaching target language to the students (Elkhouly, 2010). It is hoped that e-learning can make the teaching and learning of foreign language such as Chinese language to become more effective and impactful.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Modern technology will become more and more popular in these coming days. Therefore, students who are living in this digital era must learn and know how to use the technological tools properly, especially for their educational purposes (El-Seoud et.al, 2013, Kakoty & Sarma, 2011). As the Chinese language e-learning platform still stands on the trial stage at this moment, the students' perceptions in this study are viewed as a very good feedback and meaningful opportunities for improving the weaknesses and limitation of this educational online tool. At the same time, this platform on such tools and their alternatives use also need to be further explored in searching for more efficient ways in order to enhance the students' four language skills, as well as to provide a greater potential to become more successful in the blended learning environment in the future.

A number of limitations could be found from this study. First, the students' assessment and academic performance was not taken into account in this study; which should be used to significantly link to their perceptions. Second, the number of students was not enough, which was not really adequate to represent all the local universities students to indicate their opinion. Despite the limitations underlying this study, the results have contributed on students' perspectives of e-learning application in language skills that may bring new impetus for future studies.

A number of recommendations for future researches are also emerged from this study. The first recommendation would be to expand this study's sample size and the geographic area of the respondents. Another recommendation would be to investigate the perspectives of respondents specifically from different gender, ethnic and subject. These findings could possibly draw comparison between the results. Another possibility is to study the influence of different types of e-learning in four learning skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing. Discovering which types of e-learning influence these four learning skills would assist teachers in designing e-learning instruction for remediation and recovery programs. It is also recommended that teachers or educators to apply e-learning in foreign language classroom in Malaysian tertiary institutions as to help the learners in enhancing their Mandarin language skills learning.

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