

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON MOBILE LEGENDS: BANG-BANG (MLBB) AS MEDIUM TO LEARN ENGLISH

Dewi Christa Kobis<sup>1</sup>

Michel Farrel Tomatala<sup>2</sup>

STMIK Multicom Bolaang Mongondow

### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to know students' perceptions on the role of Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang (MLBB) as the medium to learn English. This study explores MLBB as a possible training center where all skills which are necessary to learn English such as vocabulary, listening, reading, writing and speaking had been learned through the process of playing the game. This study uses quantitative and qualitative methods where questionnaire and interviews are employed to find the answers for all research questions. The respondents were 31 freshmen students in STMIK Multicom Bolaang Mongondow who took Information Technology as their major. This study found that the majority of respondents perceive MLBB as an effective medium to learn English. 58.1% claimed that MLBB enriched their vocabulary, 61.3% claimed that MLBB helps them in listening practice, 58.1% claimed that they can read and spell English well after playing MLBB, 48.4% claimed that MLBB helps them in writing, and 67.7% claimed that MLBB helps improving their English pronunciation and speaking skill.*

**Keywords:** English, MLBB, Online Video Games

### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi para siswa tentang peran Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang (MLBB) sebagai media pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini memeriksa peran MLBB sebagai wadah pelatihan yang memungkinkan seluruh kemampuan bahasa Inggris seperti perbendaharaan kata, kemampuan mendengar, membaca, menulis dan berbicara dapat dilatih ketika bermain MLBB. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dan kualitatif dengan kuesioner dan wawancara digunakan sebagai sarana untuk mencari jawaban terhadap pertanyaan penelitian. Para responden dari penelitian ini adalah 31 mahasiswa baru di STMIK Multicom Bolaang Mongondow yang memilih program studi Teknik Informatika. Penelitian ini mendapati bahwa mayoritas dari para responden berpendapat bahwa MLBB adalah sarana efektif guna mempelajari bahasa Inggris. 58.1% berpendapat bahwa MLBB memperkaya perbendaharaan kata bahasa Inggris mereka, 61.3% berpendapat bahwa MLBB membantu mereka dalam berlatih mendengar, 58.1% berpendapat bahwa MLBB membantu mereka berlatih membaca, 48.4% berpendapat bahwa MLBB membantu mereka meningkatkan kemampuan menulis, dan 67.7% berpendapat bahwa MLBB sangat membantu mereka berlatih berbicara bahasa Inggris.*

**Kata Kunci:** MLBB, Permainan Video secara Daring, Bahasa Inggris

## INTRODUCTION

The process of learning or acquiring a new language does not always need to be in classroom or in a strict learning environment. Rather than conventional learning activities which only allow teachers and students to be in classroom, the language learning activities by using technology devices are more effective for language learners (Kobis & Tomatala, 2020). It is found that one of considerable language learning media through technologies is online video games (Klimova & Kacet, 2017). Games ignite language learners' motivation and willingness to learn English because they provide fun and enjoyable atmosphere (Gozcu & Caganaga, 2016).

The addiction towards online video games is considered as regular nature for young people (Ružić-Baf et al., 2016). Ružić-Baf et al also added that playing online video games has been young people's daily habit and they could spend more than half a day for it. These days, the most popular online video game which is regularly played by young people is called Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang or usually abbreviated as MLBB (Rani et al., 2019).

MLBB is considered as MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena). Those who play MLBB have to fight alone or as a team via online in order to destroy the enemy's base while protecting their own base. Each team basically has five players who control their own avatars (heroes). Each hero has its own characteristic in their appearances, attacks, and specification. Interestingly, each hero has its own phrases that will be uttered when the hero appears or attacks. All of the phrases are pronounced in English. Besides having the heroes to say phrases in English, MLBB also provides instructions in English. In addition, MLBB also allows players from around the world to participate in the same match or team. Therefore, the Indonesian players can have foreign player in their team and even interact by using English.

As a popular online video game which provides English instructions and is regularly played by young people, the existence of MLBB needs to be researched in order to know deeper about its possible role in helping the players to study

English subconsciously.

There might be chance that MLBB players master English subconsciously while enjoying the process of playing the game. It is stated that second language acquisition can be processed subconsciously (Ortega, 2011). That is why the researchers of this study perceive that it is necessary to know whether MLBB can be a possible medium to help the players to learn English or not by questioning the players themselves.

By referring to the background of the study, this study proposes several research questions to investigate:

1. What is students' perception on the role of MLBB in enriching their English vocabularies?
2. What is students' perception on the role of MLBB as the medium to learn English listening?
3. What is students' perception on the role of MLBB as the medium to learn English reading?
4. What is students' perception on the role of MLBB as the medium to learn English writing?
5. What is students' perception on the role of MLBB as the medium to learn English speaking?

This study aims to know about the role of MLBB in learning English based on students' perception. The nobility of this study is that it discusses the aspects of vocabulary acquisition, listening, reading, writing, and speaking as skills that can be possibly acquired while playing MLBB while the previous studies tend to research about one aspect only.

The researches that discuss about the effectiveness of MLBB in helping the players (students) to master English have been popular these four years especially in Indonesia due to MLBB's overwhelming popularity (Rani et al., 2019). Based on linguistic perspective, the word formation processes that MLBB has are "25% initialism process, 22, 73% clipping process, 18,18% compounding process, 15%

conversion process, 13,64 & borrowing process, 3,41% back-formation process, 1,14% acronym process, and 1,14% blending process. The clipping, initialism, and compounding process make the players easily understand the actual meaning of a word in the game although it is a new word for them” (Ryan, 2018). Ryan added that because MLBB has good and proportional word formation, it is good to be used as medium to learn new language.

Word formation is closely related to vocabulary building. MLBB has been proved as good medium to enrich vocabulary (Dananjaya & Kusumastuti, 2019). Dananjaya & Kusumastuti (2019) claimed that MLBB is an effective medium to enrich English vocabulary because it provides instructions in English and also allows the Indonesian players to interact with foreign players by writing platform such as chatting and oral platform. They also added that the rich vocabulary will absolutely affect the four communication skills which are listening, reading, writing, and speaking in good way.

In 2018, Amir Rasyid conducted a study about the correlation of the habit of playing MLBB and listening proficiency. He found that MLBB listening proficiency on the second grade of junior high school at MTsN 2 Tapin fell in the excellent category where the means score of vocabulary test is 98.76. General listening proficiency of the students fell on 62.43 where it is considered as positive. It means MLBB is considered as good medium in learning listening.

MLBB is also reported as a good medium to train writing (Rahayu, 2020). Rahway conducted Classroom Action Research (CAR) where she instructed the students to play MLBB in order to gain more knowledge in English writing. She reported that the implementation of MLBB made the learning process in class easier for her students and they had become more active than before they played MLBB. She stated that before the implementation of MLBB, none of her students pass 70% as the minimum passing standard of writing subject. Finally, 72% of 28 students were able to get 75% for their writing test.

## METHODS

This study combines both quantitative and qualitative research method. The data that has been gathered through questionnaires was calculated by using Spread Sheet (MS. Excel) and analyzed quantitatively. Meanwhile, the data that has been obtained via interview was transcribed and analyzed qualitatively. These two methods are carefully deliberated to be used because they may provide better and deeper understanding and also provide more reliable result (Creswell, 2012).

The instrument that has been used for this study is questionnaire. The questionnaire for this study is specifically designed by the researchers with the intention of gaining necessary information in answering this study's research questions. The interview data that supports the questionnaire findings or have equivalent relation with the research questions will also be included in finding section. The interview was executed by using vernacular language which is "*bahasa Manado*", and then transcribed to Indonesia, then finally translated into English. The interviewer decided to use vernacular language in order to make the interviewees more comfortable during the interview section and to gain appropriate and exact data without language boundary.

The respondents of this study are 31 freshmen students of STMIK Multicom Bolaang Mongondow who took Information Technology as their major. They all participated in filling the questionnaire. Five students were chosen as respondents for the interview. The five students were chosen randomly and based on their willingness to participate in the interview. Due to interviewees' request and in order to keep their personal data secured, their real names will not be stated publicly in this study but will be labelled as "R". "R" is the abbreviation of "Respondent". The five respondents who play roles as interviewees will be mentioned as "R1", "R2", "R3", "R4", and "R5".

The data of this study has been collected through questionnaires that have been distributed via Google Docs Form to the 33 respondents on Thursday, September 24, 2020. However, there were only 31 designated respondents who participated to fill in the questionnaires. All 31 students claimed that they play

MLBB daily. The interview was conducted by interviewing 5 respondents who agreed to be interviewed by the researchers. The interview has been conducted via Zoom Meeting from 10 am to 12 pm on Thursday, October 1, 2020. Each interviewee was interviewed for at least 20-25 minutes.

In order to find trustworthy result of the participants' perception regarding the role of MLBB as medium to learn English, the researchers used Likert Scales to measure the level of agreement of each statement which has been asked in questionnaire. Likert Scale which is used to measure the finding of this study can be seen in Table 1 below (Creswell, 2012):

Table 1  
Likert Scale

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
Strongly Agree	Very Positive
Agree	Positive
Neutral	Neutral (in the middle)
Disagree	Negative
Strongly Disagree	Very Negative

*Strongly agree* and *agree* refers to positive attitudes where *very agree* is considered as highly positive and *agree* is labelled as considerate positive. It means if the respondents choose *strongly agree* or *agree*, they have positive attitude and agreement towards the statement that has been asked. Meanwhile, *neutral* means the respondent stays in the middle where he/she cannot choose whether he/she agrees or disagree towards the statement that has been asked. In contrast, *strongly disagree* and *disagree* show negative attitude. It means those who choose *strongly disagree* or *disagree* have disagreement towards the statement that has been asked (Joshi et al., 2015).

## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

### a. RQ1: What is students' perception of the role of MLBB in enriching their English vocabularies?

Table 2

Students' Perceptions on MLBB's Role in Enriching Vocabulary						
No.	Statements	VA	A	N	D	VD
1	Playing MLBB makes me obtain new English vocabularies.	6 (19.4%)	18 (58.1%)	6 (19.4%)	1 (3.1%)	0
2	I understand all English vocabularies which are used in MLBB instructions, panel, and all avatars' characteristic.	4 (12.9%)	17 (54.8%)	9 (29%)	1 (3.3%)	0

Notes: VA=Very Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, VD=Very Disagree

Based on the data in Table 2, it is found that 18 (58.1%) of 31 of the respondents *agreed* that “playing MLBB made them obtain new English vocabularies.” It means most of the respondents had positive attitude towards MLBB as an effective medium to acquire new English vocabularies. Meanwhile, 6 students (19.4%) voted for both *strongly agree* and *neutral*, and there was only 1 student who voted for *disagree*.

In addition, 17 students (54.8%) *agreed* that they “understand all English vocabularies which are used in MLBB instructions, panel, and all avatars' characteristic.” This agreement is supported by other 4 students (12.9%) who were *strongly agree* about that statement. This concludes that there were 21 students in total (17 voted for *agree* and 4 voted for *very agree*) had positive attitude about the statement which said “I understand all English vocabularies which are used in MLBB instructions, panel, and all avatars' characteristic.” Meanwhile there were only 10 students who claimed otherwise. Thus, this finding shows that students *agreed* that MLBB can be claimed as a medium to enrich their English vocabulary.

“R3” also gave statement to support this finding. Her statement can be read below:

“Uhm.... Honestly.... I.... I do not really pay attention about

vocabulary acquisition when I played games. But.... I think it's true that my vocabs have been enriched after I played Mobile Legends. Previously, Previously, Uhm... Previously I do not know the meaning of some English words such as "savage", "maniac", "battle spells", and yeah... some common terms in Mobile Legends... but now, besides knowing the meaning of those words... I even use them daily when I play Mobile Legends with friends" R3.

R3's statement is also supported by R1's clarification that can be read below:

"Ma'am, do you know right that Mobile Legend provides avatars which are actually derived from the characters in national folklore of all countries around the world?? Do you know the avatar which is called *Gatot Kaca*?? It is a character from Indonesia!!!! I use *Gatot Kaca* as my avatar several times. His phrase is "we are unity in diversity!" it is so Indonesian right Ma'am???? It means "*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*" right?? I finally know the English of "*Bhineka Tunggal Ika*" after playing Mobile Legends. Heheheeh... and off course, there are many vocabs that I get after playing that game" R1.

Both R1 and R3 claim that playing MLBB helps them to enrich their English vocabularies. Their statements truly support the role of MLBB as the beneficial medium to enrich English vocabulary.

**b. RQ2: What is students' perception on the role of MLBB as the medium to learn English listening?**

Table 3

Students' Perceptions on MLBB's Role as the Medium to learn English Listening

No.	Statements	VA	A	N	D	VD
1	I understand all English instructions that I listen while playing MLBB.	4 (12.9%)	19 (61.3%)	6 (19.4%)	1 (3.2%)	1 (3.2%)
2	Playing MLBB makes my ability in English listening better than before I played it.	5 (16.1%)	14 (45.2%)	9 (29%)	3 (9.7%)	0

Notes: VA=Very Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, VD=Very Disagree

Table 3 shows that 19 (61.3%) of 31 respondents claimed that they *agreed* about the statement which says “I understand all English instruction that I listen while playing MLBB”, and there were 4 (12.9%) students voted for *strongly agree*. Meanwhile, there was 1 (3.2%) student who claimed for *disagreed* and *very disagree*. The *neutral* was chosen by 6 (19.4%) students.

In addition, 14 (45.2%) stated that they *agreed* of the statement: “Playing MLBB makes my ability in English listening better than before I played it.” There were also 5 (16.1%) students voted for *strongly agree*. It means they were 19 students in total who have positive attitude towards the particular statement while 9 students voted for *neutral* and 3 students voted for *disagree*. Overall, the majority *agreed* that playing MLBB is effective to improve listening skill ability.

This finding is also supported by R1, R4, and R5. Their statements can be read below:

“In my junior high school days, I used to listen to the song lyrics when the music is played in order to learn English pronunciation. However, after I had become senior high school student and knew how to play online video game such as Mobile Legends, I’ve become addicted and I prefer to listen to instructions in Mobile Legends to improve my listening skill then to listen to music. Instructions in Mobile Legends sound more realistic” R1.

“How come you have poor listening skill if you play MLBB almost every day right???? I personally agree that playing MLBB helps me in improving my listening skill because that’s the fact! At least for me!! I think I am ready for listening test anytime... Hahahaha” R4.

“Yeah ma’am. I think it is true that playing Mobile Legends can improve my listening skill. At least.... About all terms in Mobile Legends. I have been playing that game for almost three years now. At

first, I did not really pay attention about it... but later as time goes by... I am familiar enough about any word that I always listen while playing Mobile Legends. When I listen into a specific word while playing, I know what does it mean and how it pronounces” R5.

The personal statements which are derived from R1, R4, and R5 support RQ2 finding which concludes that MLBB is a medium that can be used to learn English listening and even improving their listening skill.

**c. RQ3: What is students’ perception on the role of MLBB as the medium to learn English reading??**

Table 4

Students’ Perceptions on MLBB’s Role as the Medium to learn English Reading

No.	Statements	VA	A	N	D	VD
1	I understand all English words and instructions that I read on Mobile Legends’ panel board.	3 (9.7%)	17 (54.8%)	9 (29%)	2 (6.5%)	0
2	I can read and spell all English words on Mobile Legends’ panel board.	4 (12.9%)	18 (58.1%)	8 (25.8%)	1 (3.2%)	0

Notes: VA=Very Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, VD=Very Disagree

Table 3 shows that 17 (54.8%) *agreed* that they “understand all English words and instructions that they read on Mobile Legends’ panel board.” 3 (9.7%) also voted for *very agree*. It means there were 20 students in total who had positive attitude towards the statement. Meanwhile, 9 (29%) claimed that they were *neutral* and 2 (6.5%) claimed that they *disagreed* with the statement.

In addition, besides understanding all English instructions that they read, 18 (58.1%) students claimed that they “can also read and spell all English words on Mobile Legends’ panel board” by voting for *agree*. The other 4 (12.9%) students also had positive attitude towards this statement by voting for “*strongly agree*”. Meanwhile there were 8 (25.8%) students voted for *neutral* and 1 student voted for *disagree*. The majority of the respondents (22 in total) had positive attitude towards

the role of MLBB as the medium that can be used to learn English reading.

All of the respondents who played roles as interviewees also agreed about this finding. Their personal statements can be read below:

“Yeah, it’s true I understand all English instructions that I read on MLBB’s panel board. I can read all instructions too. I can even spell the letters of each word!” R1.

“Yes ma’am. I can read, spell, and understand all English instructions in Mobile Legends’ panel board.” R2.

“Ehhm... UUhh... I can read all the instructions... sometimes... sometimes....auh... I meant at the first, I got hard time to read and even understand it.... but there is translation device right in MLBB? And my friends also help me.... So... now I am fine with it.... I can read all English instructions in the panel board” R3.

“Yes, without a doubt I can read and understand all English instruction in Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang... Because, if I don’t understand the written instructions, how could I play and even win the game right???? Hahahahahaah” R4.

“It’s true I understand all instructions that I read on MLBB’s panel board while playing the game.” R5.

Overall, it is found that MLBB can be a medium to learn English learning and causes the respondents to understand all written English instructions that they read while playing.

**d. RQ4: What is students' perception on the role of MLBB as the medium to learn English writing?**

Table 5

Students' Perceptions on MLBB's Role as the Medium to learn English Writing

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I can write correctly all English words/vocabularies that I have ever read or listen while playing Mobile Legends.	2 (6.5%)	15 (48.4%)	12 (38.7%)	2 (6.5%)	0
2	I can write an essay about Mobile Legends such as the good way to play the game, the way to choose a potential hero, the effective way to win the game, or other topic related to Mobile Legends by using the vocabs that I obtained by playing Mobile Legends.	4 (12.9%)	11 (35.5%)	13 (41.9%)	3 (9.7%)	0

Notes: VA=Very Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, VD=Very Disagree

Table 5 shows that 15 (48.4%) students *agreed* that they “can write correctly all English words/vocabularies that they have ever read or listen while playing Mobile Legends.” Meanwhile both *strongly agree* and *disagree* were voted by 2 (6.5%) students and unexpectedly 12 (38.7%) students became *neutral* for this statement. The more unexpected result is the majority of the respondents voted for *neutral* for the statement “I can write an essay about Mobile Legends such as the good way to play the game, the way to choose a potential hero, the effective way to win the game, or other topic related to Mobile Legends by using the vocabs that I obtained by playing Mobile Legends.” Although the total of respondents who had positive attitude towards the statement is 15 by combining 11 who voted for *agree* and 4 who voted for *very agree*, the amount of 13 students who became *neutral* is still unexpected.

R1 and R2 gave clarifications related to this issue. Their statements can be read below:

“I think.... If you write English words after you read the words on the panels, or writing the words that you listen..... Would be easier rather than... writing an essay right??? hehehehe... for me... I am not really

good to convey my thought.... Or... and... and my feeling on the paper... it's really hard... I many times stuck on writing... That's why I am not really good in making essay I think. It's not only about the Mobile Legends... but myself... I... I am not really good in writing or expressing my feeling through pen." R1

"You can easily write the vocabs that you acquire from reading, listening, and memorizing ma'am... but... elaborate your ideas and thoughts on writing is a very different story!!! It's hard to make an essay for me. Despite the amount of vocabularies that I already memorize after playing Mobile Legends, I am still doubting myself whether I can elaborate what I know through writing or not. I am not so sure about that. I am not confident at all. That's why I voted for *neutral*." R2

Both R1 and R2 claimed that they were not really good in conveying their thoughts through writing. That is why they are not sure whether they can make an essay related to Mobile Legends or not. They stated that MLBB is not the issue, but their personal difficulty in writing is the problem. Overall, there were only 15 students who had positive attitude towards MLBB's roles as media to learn writing, 13 students voted for *neutral*, and 3 students voted for *disagree*. It is found that MLBB's role as the medium to learn English writing is not as outstanding as its role in enriching vocabulary and improving listening or reading skill.

**e. RQ5: What is students' perception on the role of MLBB as the medium to learn English speaking??**

Table 6

Students' Perceptions on MLBB's Role as the Medium to learn English Speaking

No.	Statements	VA	A	N	D	VD
1	Playing Mobile Legends makes me know the way to pronounce English words that I heard while playing that game.	8 (25.8%)	17 (54.8%)	6 (19.4%)	0	0

2	Playing Mobile Legends enables me to pronounce English words as have been pronounced in the game.	5 (16.1%)	21 (67.7%)	4 (12.9%)	1 (3.3%)	0
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Notes: VA=Very Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, VD=Very Disagree

Table 6 shows that 17 (54.8%) students voted for *agree* and 8 (25.8%) students voted for *strongly agree*. There are total of 25 out of 31 students who had positive attitude towards for the statement “playing Mobile Legends makes me know the way to pronounce English words that I heard while playing that game.” Meanwhile, the rest 6 (19.4%) students voted for *neutral*. There is no vote for *disagree* nor *strongly disagree*.

In addition, there were 21 (67.7%) students *agreed* that “playing Mobile Legends enables them to pronounce English words as have been pronounced in the game.” There are also more 5 (16.1%) students who claimed that they were *very agree* about the statement. It means there were 26 students who had positive attitude towards this statement. Meanwhile, the other 4 students voted for *neutral*, and 1 voted for *disagree*. Overall, this finding shows that the majority of the respondents had positive attitude towards the role of MLBB as a useful medium to learn speaking.

All of the interviewees supported this finding. Their personal statements related to their perceptions of MLBB as the medium to learn speaking can be read below:

“Whenever I play and my avatar is starting to attack and then saying some phrases, I began to imitate what my avatar says... “the more your fear grows, the smaller you become”. Hehehe... it’s a phrase of Eudora<sup>1</sup>. I kept saying that whenever she attacks. How is it ma’am?? My pronunciation is good right?? Hehehe” R1.

<sup>1</sup> Eudora is one of the heroes in MLBB. He can controls lightning and the thunder that she produces is so terrifying.

“I think the same ma’am. It is so true that we can imitate what our avatars said and sound like natives” R2.

“What do you want me to say ma’am? I can mention and pronounce all the instructions in MLBB very well... Just name it!!! Unstoppable? Monster Kill? Legendary? Godlike? Double Kill? Triple Kill? Maniac? Savage? Shut down? Wiped out? Turtle? Lord? Blink? Dash? Backdoor? Harass? Split Push? I know them all” R3.

“I agree that Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang helps me to have better pronunciation. Actually... I many times subconsciously shout out the instruction or what my avatar says loudly. Hahaha” R4.

“Yes ma’am. After I play MLBB I know how some English words are pronounced. I also think I am able to imitate them” R5.

All interviewees agreed that MLBB is an appropriate medium to learn speaking, and improve their pronunciation. They even acknowledged that they can pronounce like the natives after they played MLBB. This concludes that MLBB is an effective medium to learn English speaking.

All of the findings from RQ1 to RQ5 proves that students perceived MLBB as an online video games that can be useful to learn English in term of enriching vocabulary, and training listening, reading, writing, and speaking skill. This finding supports Horowitz’s research where he found that online video games has a significant relationship with English competence (Horowitz, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that MLBB is a considerable medium to learn English because students’ perceptions on MLBB’s role as the medium to learn English is considered good and positive. There are five conclusions that this study provided. First, this study found that 58.1% of respondents *agreed* that playing MLBB makes them

obtain new English vocabularies and 54.8% of respondents *agreed* that they understand all English vocabularies that they obtained by playing MLBB. Second, it is found that MLBB helps students in improving their listening skill. 61.3% of the respondents *agreed* that they understand all English instruction that they listened while 45.2% *agreed* that playing MLBB improves their listening skill. Third, 58.1% *agreed* that they can read and spell all English instructions in MLBB. Fourth, 48.4% *agreed* that they can write correctly all English vocabularies that they have ever read and listen. However, there was only 35.5% who *agreed*, and 12.9% who were *strongly agree* claimed that they can be write essay related to MLBB. Last, it is found that 54.8% *agreed* that playing MLBB makes them know how to pronounce English words in the game and 67.7% *agreed* that MLBB makes them better in pronouncing English words.

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