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Using Smartphones Applications in Learning English as a Foreign Language

استخدام تطبيقات الهواتف الذكية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

Hala Ali Almahdi

Faculty of Education and Languages, Surman

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Abstract:

The major aim of this research paper is to know the effect of using smartphone applications on learning English as a foreign language. A Sample of 100 students from fourth year English department at Zawia University participated in the study. Data were collected by a questionnaire. This questionnaire aims to answer the main research question: what are the effects of using smartphones applications on learning English as a foreign language. The collected data were analyzed by using quantitative design and discussed in relation to the research question. The findings of this paper show that smartphone applications have a positive impact on learning English as a foreign language. The majority of students use the Applications for translation, Improving language skill and for academic purpose.

Key Words: smartphone applications - learning English - a foreign language

ملخص:

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الورقة البحثية معرفة تأثير استخدام تطبيقات الهواتف الذكية على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. شارك في الدراسة عينة من 50 طالبا وطالبة من السنة الرابعة قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة الزاوية. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام الاستبيان. يهدف هذا الاستبيان إلى الإجابة على سؤال البحث الرئيسي: ما هو تأثير استخدام تطبيقات الهواتف الذكية على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها باستخدام التصميم الكمي ومناقشتها فيما يتعلق بمسألة البحث في هذه الورقة. تظهر نتائج هذه الورقة أن تطبيقات الهواتف الذكية لها تأثير إيجابي على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. يستخدم غالبية الطلاب تطبيقات لغرض الترجمة وتحسين المهارات اللغوية ولأغراض أكاديمية. الكلمات المفتاحية: تطبيقات الهواتف الذكية - تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية - لغة أجنبية

Introduction

Now days with increasing frequency, mobile technologies are in common use, regardless of the time of day or place. In fact, it has been claimed that mobile technologies are now "a familiar part of the lives of most teachers and students"(Facer, 2004:1) Mobile phones are used for their basic functions, such as sending messages, making calls, sending emails, listening to music, watching videos and so on, but with potential benefits for the educational context. The ability of this technology to perform actions related to language learning and teaching has thus led to researchers investigating the perspectives of smartphones and their contribution to learning in general and language in particular(Facer, 2004).A review of the use of mobile devices in language learning projects funded by the European Union (EU) since 2001 confirmed that, mobile phones are the most frequently used devices out of all handheld equipment. Moreover, in recent years, with the rapid development in technology, smartphones and other devices which provide easy access to information at any time have led to a further increase in the use of mobile devices(Pęcherzewsk and Knot, 2007). Mobile phones have their impact of the life of Libyan EFL university teachers and students and this inspired the

research to conduct this study. The present research administered a questionnaire to elicit students' perceptions of the effectiveness of mobile phone applications on learning English.

Literature Review

A mobile app, as a computer program, is designed to run on mobile phones, tablet computers (like iPad) and other mobile devices. The word "app" is a shortening of the term 'application software'. Apps are easily available through application distribution platform called App Market, and these apps are typically operated by the owner of the mobile operating system, such as the Apple App Store, Google Play, Windows Phone Store, and BlackBerry App World. There are two main app stores: Google Play for Android and Apple App Store for iOS. Google Play, known as Android Market, is an international online software store developed by Google for Android devices (Chu, 2009). Apple App Store for iOS is the first app market, which set the standard for app distribution services (Rao, 2011). As humans sometimes encounter different educational problems, it seems that mobile learning technologies are quite promising in addressing a number of issues. According to (West, 2012) technologies of mobile learning have the potential to transform the educational field in favor of learners as the ability of students to have access on internet using their smart phones, tablets or laptops create great learning opportunities for them in different respects. Such, technologies enable easy access on relevant information, provide engagement opportunities for both learners and teachers, fosters learning and transforms the way learning takes place. Kurtz (2012) stated that, Smartphone and other mobile learning technologies not only provide opportunities for learners to learn interactively through different platforms, but they also provide a number of ways and tools for learners to learn on their own and teach themselves in their way.

Mobile learning technologies such as Smartphones can be used for different instructional purposes in classroom settings and outdoors. Educators have claimed that mobile learning technologies are great tools which provide great and highly potential language learning opportunities regardless of the environment where students are (Kukulka-Hulme, and Shield, 2008). Hashemi and Ghasemi, (2011) claim Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) does not solely provide language learning opportunities, but it also supports students with enough chances for exercises which incorporate the four main language skills (Hwang *et al* 2013). Smartphone use in language learning can be of great benefits especially in vocabulary acquisition, spelling and pronunciation, grammar, listening and reading skills. In order to be able to communicate effectively, learners have to master a large number of words, they need to practice listening in order to gain knowledge in pronunciation, they need practice in reading and grammar, too (Chi-Yen Chiu 2015).

As researchers have noted mobile learning technologies have great potential to offer language learners in many ways. This was demonstrated by a number of studies conducted in the world. A study was conducted by Kennedy and Levy (2008) who gave students the ability to receive text messages with known words in different relations through SMS to their mobile phones. They were received around ten messages every week. Their results showed that,

receiving text messages with English words, turned out to be a useful way to acquire English vocabulary. On the other hand, Chen *et al* (2008) combined words and pictures by annotation using mobile learning technologies and found that students with lower verbal and higher visual ability benefited in vocabulary acquisition. Bomar (2006) states that, listening skills increased the potential of students' ability for understanding the main ideas and therefore more ready for discussion. Thus, Rutherford (1987) and Krashen (1989) conducted a study in which their participants were given reading and listening study materials by using study materials from grammar and reading in a consequent way in order to investigate the acquisition of the material when given bit by bit using mobile learning technologies. Findings of the study suggested that the acquisition of the materials as improved due to the organized way of delivering the materials using iPods. ALAamri (2011) investigated the use of cell phones in the process of learning English by Sultan Qaboos University students. The study sheds light on the behavior, the attitudes and the problems that Omani students face in using their mobile phones in the process of learning. Results showed that, the use of mobile phones in the classroom was limited because teachers discourage students from using their phones while students prefer to do so. Dang (2013) studied the Vietnamese learners' experience and attitudes towards mobile phone use in English language learning. He asserted that despite its infancy, the use of mobile phones had drawn many researchers and educators' attention for its potential contributions to education in general and language learning in particular. Findings of this. They also emphasize their acceptance of using this technology in studying English. Muhammed (2014) investigated learning through mobile phones amongst EFL Sulaimania University students in Iraq. The results revealed that 99% of the participants considered mobile phones as an effective tool for language learning. A number of applications such as radio programmes, free PDF books and articles vocabulary advanced grammar, TOEFL, spell checking and proofreading were used by Sulaimania University Students

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of using smartphones applications on learning English among English fourth year students in Zawia University. This study was conducted to answer this question:

What is the impact using smartphones applications on learning English among English fourth year students in Zawia University? The participants of this study are English fourth year students at Zawia University. A sample of 100 students from English fourth year students participated in the study. These students were different in their English level, gender and age. A questionnaire was developed by the investigator to know the access of Smartphone using on studying English. The questionnaire consisted of 4 parts each part includes 5 questions. The questionnaire was administered among mention number during the spring semester of 2020. The participants were asked to respond to the statements by indicating whether they always, sometimes or never use their smartphones. In order to make sure that students understand all the items of the questionnaire was translated orally into Arabic. Statistical analysis: data were analyzed by one-way ANOVA test.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed and presented in the following tables.

Table1: Using Mobile Phones for the Purpose of Communication in English and Arabic.

	Statement	Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
1	I use English as a medium of communication while chatting on WhatsApp Messenger.	51%	11%	38%	100%
2	I use Arabic as a medium of communication while chatting on WhatsApp messenger.	49%	21%	30%	100%
3	I use English as a medium of communication while chatting on Facebook.	55%	12%	33%	100%
4	I use Arabic as a medium of communication while chatting on Facebook.	33%	28%	39%	100%
5	I use English as a medium of communication while writing an email to my friends.	49%	10%	41%	100%

Table (2) analysis of variation (ANOVA) (p=0.01) for Using Mobile Phones for the Purpose of Communication in English and Arabic.

F crit	P-value	F	MS	df	SS	Source of Variation
6.926608	6.16	24.18979	0.123207	2	0.246413	Between Groups
			0.005093	12	0.06112	Within Groups
				14	0.307533	Total

The data presented in the above table indicate that 51% of the students use English as a medium of communication for chatting on WhatsApp messenger, 55% on Facebook, and 49% for the purpose of writing an email. Data also reveal that 49% of the students use Arabic as a medium of communication for chatting on WhatsApp messenger and 33% on Facebook with high significant difference(p=0.01), table (2).

Table3: Using Mobile Phones Applications for the Purpose of Improving English Language Skills.

	Statements	Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
1	During free time, I watch English videos on YouTube	71%	20	9	100%
2	During free time, I watch Arabic videos on YouTube.	29%	46	25	100%
3	Mobile phone applications help me to improve my English speaking skills.	66%	23	11	100%
4	Mobile phone applications help me to improve my English writing skills.	73%	12	15	100%
5	Mobile phones applications help me to learn new words of English.	89%	6	5	100%

Table (4) Analysis of variation (ANOVA) (p=0.01) for using Mobile Phones Applications for the Purpose of Improving English Language Skills.

F .crit	P-value	F	MS	Df	SS	Source of Variation
6.926608	0.019192	5.595764	544.3732	2	1088.746	Between Groups
			97.28309	12	1167.397	Within Groups
				14	2256.144	Total

The data presented in the above table indicate that 71% of the students watch English videos on the YouTube. 66% of the students believe that mobile phones applications help in enhancing their English speaking skills, 73% believe that mobile phones applications contribute to improving their English writing skills while 89% of the students believe that mobile phones applications help them to learn new English words with insignificance difference (p=0.01), table (3).

Table5: Dependence on Mobile Phones for Translation

	Statement	Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
1	Electronic dictionary is necessary for me to translate English words into Arabic.	81%	10%	9%	100%
2	I use the Electronic dictionary to translate Arabic words into English.	81%	11%	8%	100%
3	The software I use on my mobile phone can translate English words correctly into Arabic.	75%	20%	5%	100%
4	The software I use on my mobile phone can translate Arabic words correctly into English.	54%	23%	43%	100%
5	I can understand English words without using a mobile phone.	52%	26%	22%	100%

Table (6) Analysis of variation(ANOVA) (p=0.01) for Dependence on Mobile Phones for Translation

F .crit	P-value	F	MS	df	SS	Source of Variation
6.926608	4.7805	25.49774	0.431847	2	0.863693	Between Groups
			0.016937	12	0.20324	Within Groups
				14	1.066933	Total

The data presented in the above table indicate that 81% of the students find the electronic dictionary useful for translating English words to Arabic while 81% of the students use the Electronic dictionary to translate Arabic words into English. The statistics show that 75% of the students believe that the software used on the mobile phones can translate English words into Arabic while 54% of the students are confident that the software used in their mobile phones can translate Arabic words into English accurately. The data presented in the above table also specifies that 52% of the students are confident in understanding English words without using a mobile phone with high significant difference (p=0.01), table (6).

Table7: Mobile Phones for Academic Purpose

	Statement	Always	Sometimes	Never	Total
1	I scan and save the study-related reading materials to my mobile phone.	63%	25%	12%	100%
2	My smartphone applications help me to improve my English language skills.	81%	15%	4%	100%
3	I use mobile apps to watch lectures and interventional videos.	46%	29%	25%	100%
4	I use mobile apps to get more explanations for material rather than using books.	84%	12%	4%	100%
5	I use smartphone apps for study and research activities rather than library	75%	15%	10%	100%

Table (8) Analysis of variation (ANOVA) ($p=0.01$) for Mobile Phones for Academic Purpose

F .crit	P-value	F	MS	df	SS	Source of Variation
6.926608	4.26E-06	41.12625	0.507087	2	1.014173	Between Groups
			0.01233	12	0.14796	Within Groups
				14	1.162133	Total

The above data indicate that 63% of the students scan their academic reading materials on their mobile phones while 81% of them believe that mobile phones help them to improve their English language skills. 46% of the students indicate that they use mobile apps to watch lectures and interventional videos. while 84% of the students use mobile apps to get more explanations for material rather than using books. The data presented in the above table also specifies that 75% of the students use their smartphone apps for study and research activities rather than library with high significant difference ($p=0.01$), table (8).

Discussion

Based on the findings of this research it is clear that Smartphone Applications have positive effects on learning English.

Results obtained in table (1) show that the majority of students use English as a medium of communication for chatting on WhatsApp messenger, Facebook and writing an email. In addition, these students depend on mobile phones to understand English words and sentences. These results are on line with those of (Talal 2016) who found that, 78% of Saudi students at Aljouf University use English as a medium of communication for chatting on WhatsApp messenger, Facebook and writing an email.

Results obtained in table (3) show that Smartphone Applications have a positive impact on learning English language. The majority of the participants in the research think that Smartphone Applications help them in their attempts to learn English language. These findings are also supported by (Chi-Yen Chiu 2015) who claimed that, Smartphone applications use in language learning can be of great benefits especially in vocabulary acquisition, spelling and pronunciation, grammar, listening and reading skills.

Results obtained in table (5) show that, the majority of students use Smartphone applications for translation, that is, translate words or text from English to their language or vice-versa. These findings are supported also by (Kennedy and Levy 2008) which gave students the ability to get text messages with known words in different relations through SMS to their mobile phones. They were able to get around ten messages every week. The findings of the study showed that receiving text messages with English words, turned out to be a useful way to acquire English vocabulary.

Results obtained in table (7) show that the mobile APPS help students to improve their English language skills and to be autonomy. They help students to watch lectures and interactional videos, get more explanations for material rather than using books and study and research activities rather than library. These results are on line with the results obtained by (Mtegaetal 2012). His study reveals that smartphone applications are used for teaching and learning purposes among both teaching staff and students. Most of the respondents use their mobile phones applications for teaching and getting more explanations for material rather than using books and study and research activities rather than library. Moreover, (Ally *et al* 2007) found that mobile phones have increased the ability of the students to improve their English language skills.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the questionnaire it is clear that, Smartphone Applications have positive impact on learning English by nearly all the targeted university students at Zawia University. Smartphone and other mobile learning technologies is benefit a lot, as they offer language learning opportunities everywhere, and this is due to their portal and connectivity ability. The findings of this study can be summarized in the following points. First, Libyan EFL students display a high use of their mobile phones applications in learning English outside the classroom. Second, the majority of students use English as a medium of communication. They use English for chatting on WhatsApp messenger, Facebook, and for the purpose of writing an email. Third, the target students use their smartphones Application for improving their speaking skill, listening skill, writing skills and to learn new English words. Fourth, the majority of students use Smartphone applications for translation, that is, translate words or text from English to their language or vice-versa. Finally, the target students use the mobile APPS for academic purpose like, watch lectures and interactional videos, get more explanations for material rather than using books and study and research activities rather than library.

RECOMMENDATION

After considering the findings from the research, the following points could be recommended:

1. Use it at short period of time and for learning purpose.
2. Use Smartphone applications enables practicing language skills.

3. Use it either at home or in classroom, but keep using it in a controlled way, not wasting too much time for chatting, or playing games as this would lead in negative effects.
4. Teachers should assign particular tasks which involve using the mobile applications to make sure that the students are in the process of language learning even when they are at home.
5. Teachers should explore the new trends of teaching along with the technological tools to enhance the learners' propensity for using the learning apps outside the classrooms.

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