The Influences of Mobile Learning Applications on Students' Learning of English Language: Soran University as an example.

Chiaye Khorsheed Faqe
Soran University
Faculty of Arts
English Department
Chiayee.faqe@soran.edu.iq

Abstract: This study aims at investigating the role of mobile learning applications in the process of learning English language among Soran university students. It is generally believed that in this technology era, smart phones and other portable wireless devices play a remarkable role in learning environment, including keeping in touch with friends and families, checking facebook, chatting, sending emails, twitting. For students, the availability, accessibility, flexibility of mobile applications presents new attitudes toward learning of English language. The results revealed that mobile learning applications can motivate students learn English language and create a learning environment anytime and anyplace.

Keywords: Mobile devices, Mobile learning, Mobile Phone Applications, Mobile language learning.

Introduction

With the development of mobile devices, students can easily integrate their learning activities with mobile applications whenever and wherever they like. It is widely believed that mobile phones are already becoming interesting devices in making learning of English language alive and effective, much more than just a tool for conveying our voices, videos, and messages.

With the advance of mobile technology and the ownership of mobile phones, a great change has been occurred in supporting learning. These developments became an amazing landscape for student's achievement, and for those learners who might not have enough chance to participate in learning (Kukulska-Humle et al, 2005, as cited in Hashemi et al, 2011). Squire& Dikkers(2012) state that using mobile phones in educational setting can allow students learn subjects better and create a perception that mobile phones can be considered as useful language learning tools.

Nobody has doubts that technology has changed the learning environment and leaning skills as well, on this base, in Mehta's (2012 ,p.82) view, "with mobile phones, students can easily access language learning materials and communicate their teachers in spending no time". Mehta appears to see that mobile phones have effective capabilities for driving the students incorporate in learning English as a second language.

Attewell (2004) reveals that mobile phones can make students feel reluctant and raise self-confidence which might lead to create a better experienced atmosphere. In Janelle's (2010) words, mobile learning devices will help students twenty four hours access to obtain learning materials and facilitate the learning environment even when they work out.

When college goers have desires to use mobile phones and other technological devices in the language learning process, they might feel more freedom, active, motivated and comfortably involve in the language learning (Wang, 2004, cited in Kalanzadeh et al, 2014, p. 815).

Review of Related Literature

The importance of learning English as a mutual communication language automatically gives the opportunity to improve English either as a second language or foreign language. In Kurdistan, our children start studying English at the beginning of 1st grade in primary school at the age of 6, and our kids in kindergarten at the age of 5.

In all Kurdistan Universities, there are some compulsory English classes that students should take it and pass. The classes cover all the four skills of language learning (Speaking, reading, writing and listening). In Soran University, our Curriculum tries to teach the whole skills so as to prepare a new generation for academic, social and marketing purposes.

Learning English language through Mobile learning electronic devices swiped all the natural borders between countries, and enable both participants (teachers and students) cooperate and interact effectively.

Due to the close tie between language learning and Mobile learning, different studies have been investigated the impact of mobile phones in learning English as a second language. Cavus (2010) conducted a study on investigation mobile devices in education and explored that students would like to use mobile phones in their learning so as to facilitate the learning process.

Also, Agca&Ozdemir (2013) examined learning vocabulary via mobile phones, and they concluded that students use mobile device as an innovative and funny applications, they believe that mobile learning applications can give curiosity for learners and make their activities more attractive and encourage learners learn in a good way.

There was another study done by Ozdalmi and Cavus (2011) in which they report that mobile learning environment should be prepared wisely and carefully through the learning activities and the knowledge of teaching medium, otherwise learning outcomes might not be obtained from the mobile applications. They presented that Students, teachers, environment, content, and evaluation are the most effective aspects for the implementation of mobile applications in learning English language.

The researcher also found another study done by Idrus& Ismail (2013) in which they conducted a study about using wireless technology toward studying English as a second language. Results of their study suggested that learners of English language can learn better when they are able to integrate mobile devices capabilities in their learning content.

Besides using wireless devices for listening, speaking, and reading, they highlighted that learners can achieve a good expanding ideas on writing as well. And also, they explored that learning language through wireless technology also gives beneficial values which can effectively

help English language learners display their perceptions and knowledge in target language and get rid of memorizing facts.

Furthermore, Cavus & Al-Momani (2011) showed that mobile learning through the learning applications would reluctantly give learners more flexibility to learn in every nook and cranny. Mobile learning provides them more freedom and excited time to exist in several different places than the four walls of classrooms with standing teachers. They also described mobile learning applications as a good, friendly ways of learning, and providing with more high quality of service especially for those who are keen on integrating mobile technology in their educational settings, such as teachers, students, universities, schools, and institutions.

However, Pilar et al (2013, p.1192) indicate that "there was a high number of Apps that presented technical problems at the time of downloading or when staring them. In fact, more than one third of apps downloaded by evaluators proved not to work properly or not to work at all".

The researchers presented that a large number of applications can work with apple devices(I Phone, I Pad , and sometimes, IPod Touch), approximately one in four available for Android ; very few of the applications can run with the rest of software. We can easily understand the software of mobile applications might create problems for the landholders of those different devices.

Go and by large, the learners will be frustrated and fed up with downloading the apps and not working correctly, and sometimes deny downloading because of the various software. Types of software should be taken into account so as to help the students and learners get used of apps successfully.

Some of the previous studies examined the role of mobile phones in learning new vocabularies, because learning vocabulary is an essential part of learning a foreign language. One of the studies is carried out by (Baki, 2010 as cited in Alzubi & Sabha 2013, p.181) in which they investigated that "using mobile phones as a vocabulary learning tool is more effective than one of the traditional vocabulary learning tool".

Most of the studies proved that mobile phones are effective tools in most of the cases toward language learning. Despite the potentials we have mentioned, there are other studies conducted different opinions toward using mobile phone applications for language learning. For example, Thornton and Houser (2003, cited in Abbas&Hashemi (2013, p.546) explain that "mobile phones tiny screen sizes were considered unsuitable for learning but effective for review and practice".

While Mehta (2012, p. 89) suggested that "Mobile companies should seek the suggestions from language experts to update their cell phones and develop suitable software and applications for teachers and students to use". In Mehta's words, we can conclude that mobile phones can be a source of irritations and interrupting lessons and causing distractions while using inside the classrooms, because it is not easy to control all student mobile screens and advising them using the applications only for learning.

Furthermore, the small size of mobile screen ,lack of keyboard , limited battery life, poor access to internet will lead both teachers and students of learning environment to provide a solution toward such problems because the number of educators will increase and the demand for new devices to obtain more collaborative and flexibility is also on the rise.

Moreover, Kukulska-Hulme et al (2011, p.13) conducted a study in which participants reported some technical and social problems such as, "slow writing, noisy environment, e.g. on public transport, restrictive environments, e.g. hospitals, poor sound quality, feeling of 'physical togetherness is missing', can't connect mobile to projectors". Due to the electronic radiations, humans might face with some problems of health. Hashemi et al (2011) points out those mobile learning devices might be incorporate especially for those students who suffer from dyslexia and other learning difficulties. They also sheds some light on the disadvantages of mobile learning applications, like out of date quickly(some of the apps will be out of dated soon), problems of printing(educators will be frustrated with printing, especially when they do not have access to network), and problems with moving graphs as well.

Kukulska-Hulme & Agnes (2012, p.7) make the negative points of mobile learning applications for instance, learning underground (in such places learners will lose signal which might result in interrupting), costs of network (someone might be fed up with the cost of connectivity especially when you are travelling to another country), and also personal safety should be taken into consideration (using mp3 or mp4 while you are behind the steering wheels).

Methodology

This study uses quantitative method in order to gather data from students, including questionnaire. All students who participate in this research are volunteer and they have rights to not to participate.

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, the researcher presented the sample of questionnaire to a group of instructors and experienced teachers for modifications and amendments.

On the basis of teachers' feedback, the questionnaire was made. Sixty five Junior English students will participate in the study (30 males) and (35 females); they are studying English language at Soran University/ Faculty of Arts/ Department of English. The researcher will distribute the questionnaire among the students randomly. Their Reponses will be analyzed by using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 22) in accordance with 5-point Likert Scale; from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", the middle point being neither agree nor disagree.

Results of the Study

Part One: Students' demographic information

Table One: The participants of Male and Female students

Table 1

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	30	46.2	46.2	46.2
Female	35	53.8	53.8	100.0
Total	65	100.0	100.0	

Table one illustrates that 46.2 % (30 respondents) are male and approximately 53.8 % (35 respondents) are female population.

Table Two: The respondents of Age differences

Table 2

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
19-22	63	96.9	96.9	96.9
23-26	1	1.5	1.5	98.5
27-30	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total	65	100.0	100.0	

Table two indicates that almost all the students 96.9 % (63 participants) ranged aged between (19-22) years old.

Table Three: Ownership of Mobile Devices by the Students.

In examining the ownership of mobile phone devices, table three is significantly important for examining the ownership of the devices by the students.

Table 3

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Usual Mobile Phone	6	9.2	9.2	9.2
Mobile Phone with Bluetooth	8	12.3	12.3	21.5
Smart Phone	51	78.5	78.5	100.0
Total	65	100.0	100.0	

Table three illustrates that all participants have mobile phones. Almost 78.5 % (51 students) own smart phones, while 12.3 % (8 students) have mobile phone equipped with Bluetooth and 9.2 % (6 students) of participants own simple mobile phones.

Part Two: Students' use and perceptions of mobile learning applications

The table below illustrates the students' perception toward mobile devices for language learning. Based on the results; the students agreed that the mobile phone applications overall motivated them in learning language.

Statements	S A %	A %	NS %	D %	SD %
1.I like mobile learning applications because I can learn in my own time.	26.2	70.8	1.5	1.5	0
2.The learning applications on mobile phones enhanced the process of my learning					

English anytime and anywhere.	**27.7**	**38.5**	**27.7**	**6.2**	**0**
3.Mobile learning applications helped me actively engage with language learning.	**35.4**	**52.3**	**6.2**	**6.2**	**0**
4.Mobile learning applications has increased my vocabulary while writing English texts.	**56.9**	**32.3**	**6.2**	**3.1**	**1.5**
5.The learning applications have encouraged me to increase my hand touch speed in writing.	**30.8**	**27.7**	**29.2**	**10.8**	**1.5**
6.I know how to choose variety of words with the help of mobile dictionaries and synonym apps.	**40**	**40**	**16.9**	**3.1**	**0**
7.When a grammatical mistake occurs, the grammar applications will help me to correct my mistakes.	**47.7**	**38.5**	**10.8**	**3.1**	**0**
8.The learning applications helped me to pronounce English words and phrases easily.	**70.8**	**26.2**	**1.5**	**1.5**	**0**
9.I find it easy correcting my mistakes that I had before.	**21.5**	**47.7**	**24.6**	**6.2**	**0**
10.I am able to use a lot of new words while writing texts in English.	**26.2**	**58.5**	**13.8**	**1.5**	**0**
11.The learning applications on mobile phones became an easy going teacher everywhere and every time.	**29.2**	**49.2**	**15.4**	**6.2**	**0**
12.In general, mobile phone applications helped me improve my English and made me productive.	**52.3**	**35.4**	**9.2**	**3.1**	**0**

A (Strongly agree), B (Agree), C (Not sure), E (Disagree), D (Strongly disagree)

According to the above table, when asked about their desire towards the use of mobile applications in learning English language, 70.8 % of the students agreed that they like to use mobile applications for the purpose of language learning anywhere and in their own time. The second high score of the students' perception can be found in the statement 8, in which the applications helped them effectively pronounce words and phrases correctly. Significantly (56.9 %) respondents strongly agreed that certain applications helped them to increase their vocabulary and terms, compared to (6.2 %) respondents not sure about it. Also statement 7" When a grammatical mistake occurs, the grammar applications will help me to correct my mistakes (47.7 %)" strongly agreed that the grammar applications motivated them correct their grammar mistakes. And a big number of students (49.2 %) in statement number 11 agreed that such sorts of applications might help them like guide anywhere and anytime which can be regarded as more practical apps in their studying. In general, 52.3 % strongly agreed that the mobile phone applications made them more productive, and students enjoyed using such applications as helpful devices because of their flexibility and accessibility anytime and anywhere. Throughout this clear finding, it can be seen that students seek to use mobile applications in the process of learning English language and they determine the interesting devices in the process of education.

Part Three: Gender Differences toward the use of Mobile Applications.

The table below shows that there is slight difference between males and females toward the perceptions. According to the table, the gender perception of males is (1.70) as compared to females' perception which is (1.57). Due to the table, males are more accustomed with mobile learning applications compared to females.

	Gender	Number	Mean	
	Male	30	1.70	
	Female	35	1.57	

Discussion

The findings obtained from the current study indicate that English department students at Soran University have a positive understanding toward the use of mobile applications in learning English language. The results also showed that mobile learning applications are to a degree important in which the applications can provide the students much more personalized learning environment anywhere and anyplace.

Mobile phones have provided a crucial benefit in the process of learning. It is difficult to find a student without mobile phone in university; they are busy with it for numerous purposes .Moreover, the learning applications on mobile phones will extend the learning environment outside the classroom in which the learning of English language is to degree limited inside the classroom.

Most importantly, mobile learning environment will motivate the students to integrate the learning applications in their daily activity because of the flexibility, accessibility, and affordability of such devices which is the users might not impose to use personal computers as the only tool to access. There is a great remarkable link between learning language and factors like technology era for being more effective and productive in language learning.

All in all, using such applications promotes the skills of students, and they will boost the learners' motivation outside the classroom which might only be a class of language acquisition. Participants will more accustom with applications for providing more educational situations.

Conclusions

Throughout the study, the current paper tries to investigate the impact of mobile application in learning English language anywhere and anytime. Mobile learning applications is regarded as the most useful tool for learners of English language in the technology era.

The learning applications on mobile phones are more flexible and affordable to the students to accustom with inside the class and outside. The students are better able to adopt themselves with the new applications and integrate more effectively where ever they wish.

With regard to modern technology, companies provide more exciting and innovative applications for language learning which lead the language learners move between indoors and outdoors. The English language learners might exploit the applications for getting more opportunity for learning in particular outdoors regardless of time and place.

Considering the results of the present study, students can benefit from the learning devices even when they are on the move. The popularity of applications might lead the learners greatly utilize due to the applications' accessibility and flexibility. Widespread use of mobile phone applications in language learning has led to change the methods in which learners learn and students attitude toward such applications in education.

Finally, we conclude that the results reveal that English department students have positive perception toward the use of such applications in the process of language learning. They note that, they can easily integrate the process of learning with mobile applications abilities. In addition, they indicate that the applications made them more effective and productive inside the class and outside the class.

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