مزايا وعيوب استخدام الهواتف الذكية من قبل متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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الملخّـــــص:

في السنوات الأخيرة، أصبح متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية يعتمدون بشكل كبير على استخدام هواتفهم الذكية للبحث عن معاني المفردات التي عادةً ما لا يعرفونها. وأبرزت دراسة أجراها سوي (2022) أن معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بحاجة إلى إدخال استخدام الهواتف الذكية كأداة تعليمية لطلابهم واتخاذ إجراءات جدية بعدم السماح لهم باستخدامها أثناء الحصص، أو من خلال إدارة الصف بشكل جيد ووضع تنظيمات صارمة تتعلق باستخدام الهواتف الذكية في الفصل.

يحاول الباحث في هذه الورقة تسليط الضوء على الأبحاث التي أُجريت في هذا المجال من خلال استكشاف مزايا وعيوب استخدام الهواتف الذكية من قبل متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من خلال جمع البيانات من دراسات متنوعة، هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى تحديد فعالية الهواتف الذكية في تعزيز اكتساب اللغة بين المتعلمين. شملت بيانات هذه الدراسة تحليل 47 مقالة نُشرت بين عامي (2014) و(2023). كانت مواضيع المقالات تدور بشكل رئيسي حول الهواتف الذكية وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.

تقدم هذه الورقة البسيطة رؤى قيمة للمربين وأصحاب المصلحة الذين يسعون إلى تحسين استخدام الهواتف الذكية في تعليم اللغة.

الكلمات المفتاحية

: التعلم عبر الهاتف المحمول، الهواتف الذكية، تعلم اللغة.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Use of Smartphones by EFL Learners
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Abstract

In recent years, English language learners are becoming highly dependent on the use of their smart phones to find out meanings of the vocabulary they usually do not know. A study by Soy (2022) highlighted that English language teachers need to introduce the use of smartphones as a learning tool to their students and take serious actions by not allowing them to use them during classes or making good classroom management and strict regulation concerning smartphone use in the classroom. The researcher in this paper attempts to shed lights on research conducted in this field by exploring advantages and disadvantages of the use of smartphones by (EFL) English language learners. This paper aims to identify the effectiveness of smartphones in enhancing language acquisition among learners by synthesizing data from various studies. The data of this study included analyzing 47 articles published between (2014) and (2023). The topics of the articles predominately were about smartphones and English language learning. This simple paper offers valuable insights for educators and stockholders seeking to optimize smartphone use in language education.

Key words: mobile learning, smartphones, Language learning

1. Introduction

The use of mobile devices has become an important part of every one' life all over the world (Metruk, 2019). Technology has been widely used in the educational sector and hugely adopted among learners and constantly update information, the great demand for people to access information everywhere and the individualization of the education have led the emergence of distance education, e-learning and mobile learning. The use of several wireless communication devices and mobile phones play a significant role in the popularization of these terms. Nowadays, there is a shift of usage where mobile

technologies are not just a means of communication anymore, but they also offer easy access to several sources of information at any time and everywhere in the field of education. (Talan 2020). However, it should be highlighted that in order to get the benefits of using technology in the teaching and learning process, teachers need to adopt that appropriately and effectively within their classrooms. The widespread trend in the shift from the use of computers to the use of smartphones attracts the attention of instructors and researchers. (Metruk, 2020). In this respect, Stockwell, (2021) highlights that the use of mobile devices has made a great impact on education both formally and informally.

This paper attempts to review research conducted in this filed and explore advantages and disadvantages of using smartphones in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning. The following overarching research question was formulated. 1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using smart phones among EFL learners? Having provided the introduction section of this paper, the next section describes the statement of the problem.

2. Statement of the problem

The adoption of technology in education, particularly in language learning, has been widely implemented in recent years (Stockwell, 2021; Godwin-Jones, 2017; Kukulska-Hulme, 2016). However, studies reviewing the use of mobile phones in language learning, especially within the Libyan context, appear to be scarce, to the best of the researcher's knowledge. This gap in the literature limits our understanding of how mobile technology can be effectively integrated into language education.

3. Aims of the study

This paper aims to provide a research review of the advantages and disadvantages of using mobile phones in language learning. Reviewing and exploring the pros and cons of the use of mobile phones in learning English language can be helpful to the idea of integrating technology into the classroom environment.

4. Significance of the study

Significance of this paper stems from the fact that reviewing the advantages and disadvantages of the use of mobile phones will provide important insights into language educators. By understanding both advantages and disadvantages of the

use of mobile phones, educators will hopefully be able to make appropriate decisions about integrating technology into their teaching practices.

5. Literature Review

The integration of technology into English Language Teaching (ELT) has gained significant attraction over the past two decades, reflecting the evolving landscape of education in the digital age. This literature review synthesizes findings from various studies on the use of smartphones and mobile applications in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning.

Numerous studies highlight the crucial influence of mobile devices on language learning. In this respect, Kukulska-Hulme (2016) states that mobile learning facilitates personalized language learning, enabling students to engage with educational content anytime and anywhere. This flexibility is crucial in accommodating diverse learning needs and preferences, making technology a powerful tool in modern education.

In a systematic review by Prodhan and Rahmatullah (2022), 25 smartphone applications were identified, with Short Message Service (SMS) being the most frequently used for vocabulary learning. The review noted that vocabulary acquisition remains a key focus area across various studies, demonstrating that mobile technology can effectively address language learning challenges.

Pimmer et al., (2018) conducted a review and analyzed 36 empirical studies, focusing on mobile and ubiquitous learning in higher education. They used thematic analysis to evaluate the educational designs and outcomes of the studies. Their findings revealed that mobile learning is increasingly recognized as a valuable educational tool in enhancing learners' capacities, motivation and autonomy. Speaking anxiety is a common barrier for EFL learners. The study by Hanafi et al. (2022) found that the use of mobile learning significantly reduced speaking anxiety among Indonesian EFL learners. The results showed that learners who engaged with technology demonstrated improved speaking skills and lower levels of anxiety compared to those who did not.

Alhuwaydi, (2022) conducted a study to review research studies published from 2010 to 2022. The aim was to synthesize the role of applications designed for vocabulary learning in Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). The results of the study revealed that specifically designed mobile applications play a

significant role in increasing learners' vocabulary knowledge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as well as their motivation, attitudes, and perceptions.

Metruk, (2022) reviewed research articles published from 2016 to 2020 to examine the learning challenges in using smartphones in English language learning. The research results showed that the reviewed studies contain recognized drawbacks to some extent. Some of the identified pitfalls included smaller dimensions of smartphones and internet connectivity issues.

6. Methodology

The current paper has adopted a meta-analysis approach in order to consolidate the findings of different studies in the field. Cooper (2017) has identified seven stages in the process of meta-analysis: 1: Formulating the problem, 2: Searching the literature, 3: Gathering information from studies, 4: Evaluating the quality of studies, 5: Analyzing and integrating the outcomes of studies, 6: Interpreting the evidence, and 7: Presenting the results. As a result, the current paper in hand was guided by the same steps in order to gather and analyze the relevant data.

7. Research question

The main concern of this review is to address the following broadly focused research question: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using smart phones among EFL learners?

8. Data analysis

The data of this review included 47 articles published between (2014) and (2023). The topics of the articles predominately were about smartphones and English language learning. Most of the studies were conducted in Saudi Arabia (7), followed by Slovakia (6), Turkey (5), China (4), Bangladesh (4), Japan (3), Pakistan (2), Cambodia (2), Algeria (2), Taiwan (2), United states (1). Iraq (1), Egypt (1), Czech Republic (1), and Iran (1).

A general estimate across multiple articles suggests that approximately 70-85% of learners and educators report positive effects of mobile phones on language learning outcomes. This includes improvements in vocabulary acquisition, engagement, and overall learning motivation.

Two main criteria were adopted to classify the selected articles: the methods employed in each study and the key results obtained. By examining the research

methodologies, we can better understand the approaches used to gather data, while the main results provide insights into the findings and implications of each study. This classification allows for a systematic analysis of how different methods influence the outcomes related to mobile-assisted language learning. Table (1) shows the different methodologies that guided the selected studies:

Table (1) the methods used in the reviewed articles

Method Used	Percentage (%)
Pre-test and post-test design	7%
Quantitative questionnaire surveys	27%
Qualitative research (interviews, focus groups)	16%
Experimental design (comparative, quasi-experimental)	16%
Systematic literature review	11%
Mixed-methods design (combining qualitative and quantitative)	11%
Descriptive research design	4%
Literature review	6%

It is clear from table (1) that the quantitative research design was the top priority of the majority of the studies. Then, the qualitative and experimental research designs occupied the second place.

Regarding the main results of the reviewed articles, table (2) demonstrates the key results that were obtained.

Table (2) the main results of the reviewed articles

Main Results	Percentage of Articles
Positive impact on language learning	32%
Significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition	21%
Increased motivation and reduced anxiety	5%
High levels of smartphone adoption and usage	10%
Positive attitudes towards mobile learning	17%
Challenges identified (distractions, lack of resources, e	12%

9. Findings and discussion

This review synthesized to explore the advantages and disadvantages of the use of mobile phones among EFL learners. The study attempted to address the following research question: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using smart phones among EFL learners? The presentation of the findings in this paper will be guided by the themes generated from the analyzed articles. Braun, & Clarke (2006) highlight the importance of themes in reach studies. The first main theme and followed by different subthemes is advantages of mobile phones.

9.1. Advantages of mobile phones

The following six themes were generated from the relevant articles. They represent the most advantages that were stated in the papers.

9.2. **Accessibility,** Stockwell, (2021) states that mobile technologies give learners the opportunity to have ongoing access to information whenever they need, which may be from fixed information sources that have been curated and/or provided by the teacher, or even from the Internet as a whole. As a result, mobile phones provide easy access to language learning resources anytime and anywhere.

9.3. **Engagement,** Godwin-Jones, (2017) point out that we need to look beyond the importance of mobile devices in the classroom, however it is crucial to examine how learners are engaged in mobile learning in the wild which may involve looking at combinations of apps that are effective to improve different skills. Therefore, these apps may enhance learners' engagement through interactive applications and multimedia content.

9.4. **Personalized learning,** according to Kukulska-Hulme (2016) many people consider technology as a way to enhance personalized learning and mobile learning in particular has been widely used. Thus, mobile technology allows for tailored learning experiences that cater to individual learner needs.

9.5. **Increased Motivation**, Alzubi, (2019) stressed that mobile devices can give EFL learners the opportunities for more personal and student-centered language learning, as a result helping them increase their motivation and autonomy as they provide the environment of learning whenever they need it.

9.6. **Support for Collaborative Learning**, Huang (2021) highlights that mobile phones enhance collaboration among learners through social media and messaging apps. Moreover, Learners indicated that the implementation of vlog

projects in English classes helped them improve collaboration skills with their peers.

9.7. **Immediate Feedback**, Klimova & Polakova (2020) highlighted that there are several mobile applications that provide instant feedback, so learners can correct mistakes in real-time. These mobile apps helped students prepare for the final exams, learners were able to access information from anywhere and at any time, students appreciated the corrective feedback and they are happy for the implementation of the mobile app in other areas of their studies.he previous six themes were generated under the main theme of advantages of the use of mobile phones. Now it is time to look at the other side of the coin and look at the disadvantages of mobile phones in language learning and the subthemes that were generated from reviewing the relevant articles.

9.8. Disadvantages of mobile phones

The following four themes emerged from reviewing the relevant articles and they represent the most common disadvantages of the use of mobile phones in language learning.

9.9. **Distraction**, according to Metruk (2022), learners encountered some challenges while doing their language tasks on their smartphones. Distraction, feedback issues, disproportionateness of level of difficulty within various tasks, which resulted in spending too much time on performing the tasks need to accomplish.

9.10. **Poorly Designed Applications**, Sa'di et al, (2021) highlighted that some teachers indicated that a number of several disadvantages might influence integrating the smartphones into learning, these drawbacks relate to the poor quality of the apps and lack of training on smartphones for academic purposes.

9.11. **Connectivity Issues**, Metruk (2022) mentioned that:

"The research results reveal that the reviewed studies contain identified drawbacks to varying degrees, while approximately one third of articles did not present any challenges. The detected pitfalls, such as smaller dimensions of smartphones, Internet connectivity issues, readiness level of both practitioners and learners, or unbalanced development of the four language skills…p,(1)".

9.12. **Lack of Authentic Materials**, Ibna Seraj, et al (2020) point out that some learners face challenges due to the absence of real-world materials in mobile learning.

10. Conclusion

Integrating technology into education and the use of smartphones and mobile applications in particular, has a significant impact on the field of English language learning. The main concern of this paper is to review studies published from 2014 and 2023 in order to examine the advantages and disadvantages of using mobile phones in learning the English language. The data for this review included 47 research papers that were related to the use mobile learning in English language. The main findings of the current study have revealed that there are a number of disadvantages to using mobile phones in language learning, such as distraction, poor application quality, and connectivity issues. However, the advantages of using mobile phones in language learning outweigh the disadvantages. Some of the pros of using mobile phones in language learning include accessibility, engagement, increased motivation and support for collaborative learning.

All in all, further research should focus on developing learning apps that are authentic and helpful for learners to benefit from these innovations effectively.

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