S. Bolatbek[1]
[1]Suleyman Demirel University, Almaty, Kaskelen, Kazakhstan

SMARTPHONE APPLICATIONS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Abstract. Nowadays the use of technology is rapidly increasing in the educational sphere as all operations can be quickly done with the utilization of these technologies. Adults, teenagers and even children can not imagine their life without smartphones which become an inseparable part of our lives. The aim of this review is to investigate the pros and cons of the usage of mobile applications in the ELT classroom and explore all currently available applications which are connected with teaching and learning English as a foreign language. A lot of studies have been done on the utilization of applications in English classrooms by researchers. The findings show that almost all of the scientists come to the conclusion that students who learnt a language using applications showed good results compared to learners who do not use them. Nevertheless, still more studies should be done to confirm the efficiency of the utilization of smartphone applications on definite language skills and cognition.

Keywords: mobile phone apps, smartphone applications, foreign language teaching, English teaching, language skills, ubiquitous learning, MALL.

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Аңдатпа. Қазіргі кезде білім беру саласында технологияны қолдану жылдам өсуде, өйткені осы технологияларды қолдану арқылы барлық операцияларды тез жасауға болады. Ересектер, жасөспірімдер, тіпті балалар біздің өміріміздің ажырамас бөлігіне айналған смартфонсыз өз өмірін елестете алмайды. Бұл шолудың мақсаты - ELT сабағында мобильді қосымшаларды қолданудың артықшылықтары мен кемшіліктерін зерттеу және ағылшын тілін шет тілі ретінде оқыту мен үйренуге байланысты қазіргі кездегі барлық қосымшаларды зерттеу. Зерттеушілер ағылшын тілі кабинеттерінде қосымшаларды қолдану бойынша көптеген зерттеулер жүргізді. Зерттеулер көрсеткендей, ғалымдардың барлығы дерлік қосымшаларды қолдана отырып, тілді меңгерген студенттер оны қолданбайтын оқушылармен салыстырғанда жақсы нәтиже көрсетті деген қорытындыға келеді. Дегенмен, белгілі бір тілдік дағдылар мен таным бойынша смартфон қосымшаларын қолданудың тиімділігін растау үшін әлі де көп зерттеулер жүргізілуі керек.

Түйін сөздер: ұялы телефон қосымшалары, смартфон қосымшалары, шет тілін оқыту, ағылшын тілі, тіл дағдылары, барлық жерде үйрену, MALL.

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Аннотация. В настоящее время использование технологий в образовательной сфере быстро увеличивается, так как все операции могут быть быстро выполнены с использованием этих технологий. Взрослые, подростки и даже дети не представляют своей жизни без смартфонов, которые стали неотъемлемой частью нашей жизни. Цель этого обзора - изучить плюсы и минусы использования мобильных приложений в классе ELT и изучить все доступные в настоящее время приложения, которые связаны с преподаванием и изучением английского языка как иностранного. Было проведено множество исследований по использованию приложений в классах английского языка исследователями. Результаты показывают, что почти все ученые приходят к выводу, что студенты, изучавшие язык с помощью приложений, показали хорошие результаты по сравнению с учениками, которые их не используют. Тем не менее, необходимо провести дополнительные исследования, чтобы подтвердить эффективность использования приложений для смартфонов в отношении определенных языковых навыков и познания.

Ключевые слова: приложения для мобильных телефонов, приложения для смартфонов, обучение иностранным языкам, преподавание английского языка, языковые навыки, повсеместное обучение, MALL.

Introduction

Currently, in the whole world, there is a rapid increase in the manufacture of technologies and smart devices, therefore utilizing them also growing fast in all spheres in our life. Moreover, it simplifies everything in work in such professions as doctors, economists, scholars, mechanics, architects and teachers. As everyone utilizes new technologies in their professions teachers are not the exception. Teachers should be aware of digital literacy and become a true model to have taught from. Therefore, it is necessary to know current smartphone applications which will be valuable in the lessons.

Teaching and learning through smart devices is practised in the whole world educational organizations and there is a great deal of evidence according to the benefits of the use of high technologies in the classroom (Farrah, 2018). Some researchers (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Ogata & Yano, 2005; Thornton & Houser, 2005; Dashtestani, 2016) have researched the advantages and importance of language learning with mobile applications despite some drawbacks such as small screen size and every time battery needs. However,

teaching foreign languages through mobile applications is one of the effective ways to encourage students (Klimova & Polakova, 2020) and always make them improve their language cognition, as it is arduous to remember language since it is not regularly used in everyday life. Also, Kim & Kwon state that "the ESL apps seem effective in that they provide a personal and learner-centred learning opportunity with ubiquitously accessible and flexible resources and activities." Thus, it may motivate students to elaborate a habit for pursuing continuous learning (Kim & Kwon, 2012). Therefore, using mobile applications in the ESL classroom creates an enthralling atmosphere to learn languages and improve various skills such as speaking, reading, writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary learning.

This study is essential to the teaching sphere, particularly learning and teaching the English language with the help of smartphone applications, because it is an ongoing trendy topic nowadays, and needs succinct information about current useful applications which are beneficial to both the ESL teachers and learners.

The goal of this review study is to investigate all trendy smartphone applications, that are both in Apple and Playmarket stores, which are effective in all English language skills. Accordingly, the research questions are as follows:

1. What are the pros and cons of using smartphone applications which are trendy in the present time?
2. What applications are available nowadays in learning and teaching ESL to improve language skills?

Literature Review

There are a lot of detected research studies accepting a general tendency in the use of smartphones for learning and teaching English as a foreign language (Klimova, 2017). As Hogan (2013) states, we cannot be teaching tomorrow's leaders today with yesterday's methods. Thus, EFL teachers should try to utilize smartphone applications in their lessons.

Kusmaryani et al. (2019) claim that with the help of mobile phones, students can easily gain access to language materials, practise all language skills, and can directly intercommunicate with other English speakers people all over the world. Also, they believe that language skills such as speaking, writing, listening and reading can be examined by learning apps. The learners can study the language everywhere despite schools, and it makes students be independent learners (Kusmaryani et al., 2019).

Yaman et al. (2019) report that a great majority of students use smartphones in language learning, especially for vocabulary learning and as a dictionary. Therefore, the authors highlight that teachers should not think of them as distractors in the class, but on the contrary, should help students learn how to use them in the right way in the classroom and take its benefits as much as possible. Moreover, according to the authors, as technology improves day by day teachers may not always restrict the use of smartphones in the class in near

future. Hence, they believe nowadays for teachers it is crucial to learn all about new applications that help to learn the English language and know its benefits and characteristics which can be a great help in the ELT classroom. Next, introduce students with these applications so they could utilise them in the right and beneficial way (Yaman et al., 2019).

Samudra et al. (2019) determined through their research work the effectiveness of English learning with a help of mobile applications rather than traditional learning. According to the authors' implementation of mobile applications in language learning saves time and energy as well as cuts the waste of papers used while learning. Likewise, Basal et al. (2016) consider utilizing smartphone applications in vocabulary teaching is a far more effective way compared with traditional paper-based activities. However, the authors explored that a major problem with these kinds of applications is a great number of vocabulary which may lead to ineffective learning, hence teachers should control a quantity of learning vocabulary in a specific time. Also, they pointed out that teachers should acknowledge pedagogical consideration while using vocabulary activities in applications as they may not be adapted for vocabulary teaching. Therefore, teachers should be aware of how to distinguish and evaluate the utility of these applications in vocabulary teaching (Basal et al. 2016). Bachore (2015) also pointed out that teachers should consider pedagogical issues which are crucial in the use of mobile applications. Therefore, according to the authors, if teachers will use these applications in the classroom they have to know all limitations and benefits and use them according to the language level of students with appropriate approaches.

There are numerous features of applications, but it is important to be aware of all the characteristics and functions of apps as well as take note of its drawbacks. According to this Heil et al. (2016) highlight that the context plays a crucial role in language learning. The authors believe that different contexts of each new word help learners to improve their cognition of that word by comprehending diverse meanings. As well they claim that "MALL technology is still primarily utilized for vocabulary instruction rather than fluency-building" (Heil et al., 2016). The authors state that vocabulary learning applications are dominant among language learning apps, therefore for future research adaptive learning and intelligent design features in applications must be a goal to achieve app developers.

Results

A lot of studies have been done on the utilization of applications in English classrooms by researchers and almost all of them came to the conclusion that students who learnt a language using applications showed good results compared to learners who did not use them. Here are some results of works according to the efficiency of utilization ESL applications in learning.

Ebadi & Bashiri (2018) investigated that in their study, the use of smartphone application showed that participants of the study, despite their

gender, proficiency level and age had positive perspectives about Vocabulary Flashcards 2016. The criterion of participants are also positive to 87% as well as negative is only 6%. Almost all participants think that the use of these applications helps to improve pronunciation skills, pictures with words is a good way to memorize words, also games used in applications help to practice learnt vocabulary enjoyably. In the study, the authors intended to investigate students' needs about the application. So the authors elicited the suggestions of learners as adding more elements in words' presentation and more test types; increasing the amount of contextualization of words; adding words' pronunciation; adding challenging quizzes. Ebadi & Bashiri (2018) believe that these suggestions of learners can be a great help for developers of the app to cognize these limitations and work with them in the future.

Ozer & Kılıç (2018) also investigated the effectiveness of mobile applications to improve academic achievement, which included all four skills: reading, speaking, writing and listening. The results showed that experimental group students got statistically considerable benefit in academic achievement. This result was also shown in works of other researchers as Bahrani (2011), Chen & Li (2010), Hsu et al. (2013), Hwang et al. (2016), Hwang et al. (2014), Kim & Kim (2012), Lu & Yang (2018), Stockwell (2010), Sung et al. (2016), and Sung et al. (2015).

Kacetl & Klímová (2019) reviewed the benefits and efficiency of the use of smartphone applications in the learning of English as a foreign language. The authors utilized studies from two recognized databases as Web of Science and Scopus which were published there between January 2015 and April 2019. Their research focused on investigating innovative and peer-reviewed English lessons. The authors investigated and summarized a lot of studies and also provided numerous data published in the last four years. So according to their investigation, the results revealed that learners were motivated to learn the language and by the tests taken was seen a significant increase in language skills of learners (Kacetl & Klimova, 2019).

Also, in the work of Kusmaryani et al., (2019) the results showed that the student's speaking skill improved after the usage of mobile applications and there was no one whose speaking skill stayed unchangeable. As well as students' critical thinking results also showed advance and no one's critical thinking result decreased after the utilization of mobile phones. The authors concluded that mobile applications can be a huge help to improve speaking skills and critical thinking based on their studies done.

There are also numerous suggestions from the authors who studied the pros and cons of mobile applications in language learning. So, Heil et al., (2016), Klimova (2017), Ebadi & Bashiri (2018), Eppard et al., (2016) concluded that more studies should be done to be sure of all the pros and cons of applications, as well as a long time plays a crucial role too, the main drawbacks of applications are, as was mentioned before, the too much vocabulary which brings to the

ineffective learning, no pronunciation function, lack of contextualized vocabulary, expensive costs and others.

So, Heil et al., (2016) suggest making a strong emphasis on intelligent commercial app design in language learning applications by providing contextualized and authentic written data so the learners could do more activities than learning only separate or primary level vocabulary.

Available applications in learning the English language

There are also plenty of works according to the selection of applications by its characteristics and functions as well as its features used in language learning.

Eppard et al. (2016) provided a list of criteria and its process for selecting applications in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. The authors determined which Ipad applications function best with an already prepared curriculum and investigated which are best supported to the curriculum at Zayed University. So the main features of applications are "sharing, engaging, thinking skills, feedback, customization, relevance, culture, cost, ease-of-use, collaborative" (Eppard et al., 2016). According to these features, the authors selected the most beneficial applications in ESL learning. Their research also focused on enquiring various applications which best fit in the educational sphere and their curriculum, even if they are paid or free in the application store. The research work was held in the university with students of various levels of English also teachers were chosen from different countries with excellent technological abilities in their study presented credible results. Eppard et al. (2016) concluded that using those applications allowed students to imitate and improve language skills.

Gangaiamaran et al. (2017) defined the MALL and its characteristics also their utilisation in education. Moreover, they classified smartphone applications for primary, secondary and tertiary levels of learners. Primary learners are 3-10 years old children, secondary level learners' age group 12-17 years, tertiary level learners include students and adults. They sorted out 10 applications for primary learners, 9 apps for secondary learners and 10 apps for advanced learners. They can be great tools for all learners to improve reading skills, writing skills, listening skills, speaking skills, vocabulary and grammar. Moreover, the authors classified these applications into the devices they are possessed, are they free or paid, and which skills they help to improve. They concluded that the classification of English learning applications can help teachers and learners to improve their particular language skills.

Agarwal (2020), Brown (2020), Hill (2018) listed the top applications available nowadays in learning languages such as Duolingo, Babbel, Tandem, Memrise, Busuu, Drops, Lingvist, Pimsleur, Tandem Language Exchange, Rosetta Stone: Learn Languages, LingoDeer, LinguaLift, HelloTalk, Mindsnacks, TripLingo, MosaLingua, HiNative, Language Learning with

Netflix. These applications have different features and usefulness to develop specific language skills of learners.

Conclusion

In this literature review, we speculated on the positive and negative sides of utilization applications in English language learning. As well as listed the main available applications these days. Scholars from all over the world studied the use of mobile phones in the lessons and came to their own decisions, almost 70% of authors found out that the use of technologies, especially smartphones in English language lessons helps to improve students' interests in the lessons. However, still, a lot of various studies should be done to distinguish the true effectiveness of using smartphone applications in learning and teaching the English language.

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