

Smartphone use in English Language Learning

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Abstract

The current century has been considered very often as a century of technology by people of different genres. The industry of technology is growing rapidly, and a lot of people including researchers, educators, teachers and learners in a way are becoming part of this huge development by technology use. In addition, the rate of internet connection continues to increase, and technology which provides easy access on the internet by mobile devices is becoming invisible. More than ever, technology of all types including Smartphones is taking an important place in our daily lives. It is being used by a lot of people, at work, at school, at home, in cafés and everywhere. Having such a device, one can have access on the internet everywhere, and can use it for different purposes, among others for language learning. Therefore, this research tried to give answers to some important questions related to Smartphone use in language learning in secondary schools. It provided answers to the following questions: What is students' perception of Smartphone use in English language learning? In English language learning for what purpose do they mostly use it? Where do they mostly use it for learning purposes?

Data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed carefully using the SPSS and interpreted using spreadsheet and charts.

Keywords: *Technology, Smartphone, learning English, adult learners*

Introduction

The use of mobile learning can be of any kind, but when it comes to language learning, mobile learning technologies such as mobile phones or Smartphone is being used for various purposes and from people of different nationality, geographical, cultural and educational background. For example in Kosovar context students aiming to learn English use Smartphones to translate words from English to Albania, or vice-versa, to advance their knowledge in pronunciation, grammar, watch movies or listen to music in their target language and so on, which might not be the case with the learners of other nationalities. However, Smartphone use by

teachers and students in language learning settings requires great skills in order for such technology to be used effectively and properly.

Based on the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS), published by International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), students using Smartphones and other similar technologies are strongly encouraged to reach objectives set out for high school students and teachers which would enable them to use these technologies for education, communication, innovation, information research and collaboration, problem solving and critical thinking purposes in highly professional manner, (ISTE, 2007).

TESOL has also produced a series of standards with the purpose of giving teachers and learners some basic skills in using technologies of different kinds in the good of language teaching and learning (Healey, Hegelheimer, Hubbard, Iannou-Georgiou, Kessler, & Ware, 2008).

The access to mobile learning technologies such as Smartphones, tablets or laptops in US is increasing, thus, around 26 percent of high school students had access to such technologies in 2008, and this rate grew up to 52 percent now, surely there are a number of reasons for this, among others such technologies enable advancement and help learners, teachers and educators get access to the content of various subjects in a timely manner and enable them construct platforms for digital assessment, so Smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices when connected through 3G/4G wireless connection become highly useful tools for learners and teachers as they offer tremendous learning opportunities, as noted in Project Tomorrow Speak Up Survey, 2013.

According to (West 2012) the ability of Smartphones and tablets to provide students access on digital content whenever they need is another reason for learners to love such technologies and use them on a daily basis. In addition, such mobile learning technologies not only serve to provide access on digital content from various locations, but they rather enable students to communicate, collaborate, create and share with each other helpful digital materials.

As there are a number of reasons and opinions for why using Smartphones and other mobile learning technologies in the educational field in general and language learning in particular, this research seeks to provide answers to the following questions related to Smartphone use in English language learning by secondary school students.

Research questions

1. What is the students' perception over the adequate use of smart phones in learning English language?
2. When you use your Smartphone to learn English, for what purpose do you mostly use it?
3. Where do you mostly use their Smartphones?

Literature Review

Learning with Mobile Learning Technologies

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.

As M Kurtz (2012) states 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.

According to Jacobs (2013) mobile learning technologies enable access to digital content and online communities at days and nights, which make learning different from classroom environment, and help teachers and learners, organize their time and use it more effectively. Further, he claims that when students get access to such digital content, they take advantage of their learning as they can adapt to their pace, method and style. On the other hand, teachers who are able to use digital dashboards can track their students' progress of certain content on the timely manner and take advantage of time to use it more effectively when in schools settings.

In terms of Smartphone use in learning English, Zilber (2013) states that it is clear that they won't substitute dedicated teachers, but their frequent use by second language learners, enables them sufficient English language practice to support their attempts to learn it regardless of their locations. More importantly, Smartphones are such devices that can be easily taken with anywhere, they are easy to use, they are very suitable for practice speaking and listening skills, and one can have access on different apps for

language practice, be it for vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar or other language skills.

Learning Languages with Smartphone

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, & Shield, 2008). As (Hashemi, & 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 (cited in Hsu, C.-K., Hwang et. al 2013:405).

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 scholars 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 conducted 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. In another research conducted by Chen et.al (2008), where words accompanied with pictures were shown by annotation using mobile learning technologies, it was found that students with lower verbal and higher visual ability benefited in vocabulary acquisition.

Bomar (2006) also states that using mobile learning technologies such as iPods, in reading or listening skills, students are much more likely to capture the main ideas and therefore more ready for discussion. Thus, Rutherford (1987) and Krashen (1989) conducted a study in which they gave learners 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 material was improved due to the organized way of delivering the material using iPods (cited in Chi-Yen Chiu 2015:65). However, despite some advantages that Smartphones have in language learning and teaching, there are some limitations as well. According to Chinnery (2006) the limited time one can use a Smartphone without charging, entering data using only one finger as well as their small screen size make Smartphones not very convenient to use them in language learning field. Another negative impact of using Smartphones in education is related to learners' achievement, as Town (2013) suggest, learners may become addicted to playing games, chatting or talking to their peers, and this in fact might be considered as a waste of time rather than learning. According to Kane (2013) learners who are not able to maintain control over the use of mobile learning technologies, including Smartphones may become nervous, upset, concerned or even angry when they cannot use them for some time. In addition, the excessive use of Smartphone can impact negatively on the relationship among adolescents as well as on their educational outcomes. On the other hand, using Smartphones could also result in harmful effects. And finally, using Smartphones for a long period of time and at a close distance may also cause symptoms of eye strain or eye fatigue (Britt, 2013). Wilson (2012) also suggests that using Smartphone in a bad position such as keeping your arms bent, head looking forward in a bent position can cause pain in the neck and spine.

Methodology

The research took place in two public secondary schools in the town of Podujeva. The sample of the research was composed of 123 students from the secondary schools "Aleksander Xhuvani" and "Isa Boletini" in Podujeva. 70 females and 53 males, this was due to the domination of the female students enrolled in the abovementioned secondary schools. Prior to conducting the research, the consent from the Directorate of Education in the Municipality of Podujeva was obtained. Consent was taken also from the headmasters of the schools in which the study was realized. Students volunteered to participate in the research. The procedures of the conducting the researches are as follows: Students were delivered a questionnaire which was composed of 25 questions related to Smartphone use in language learning. Then they filled the questionnaire themselves and handed over to the researcher. The data gathered from the questionnaires were analyzed using the SPSS program, and the findings of the research

were interpreted using simple charts in order to have a detailed understanding of them.

Findings

Based on the findings of this research it is clear that Smartphone use have positive and negative effects not only on learning but also on health related issues. Findings of the questionnaire suggest that 65 percent of all participants think that the adequate and relevant use of Smartphone can help them in learning English language. Look table 1.

Do you think that the adequate and relevant use of your Smartphone will help you to learn English?

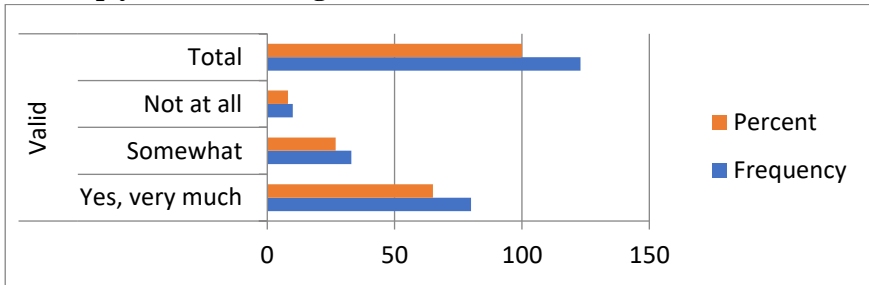


Table 1

Findings of the questionnaire also suggest, that the majority of students use Smartphone for translation, that is, translate words or text from English to their language or vice-versa. Thus findings suggest that 53 percent of all participants use Smartphone for translation. Look at table 2, for a detailed description.

When you use your Smartphone in learning English, for what purpose do you mostly use it?

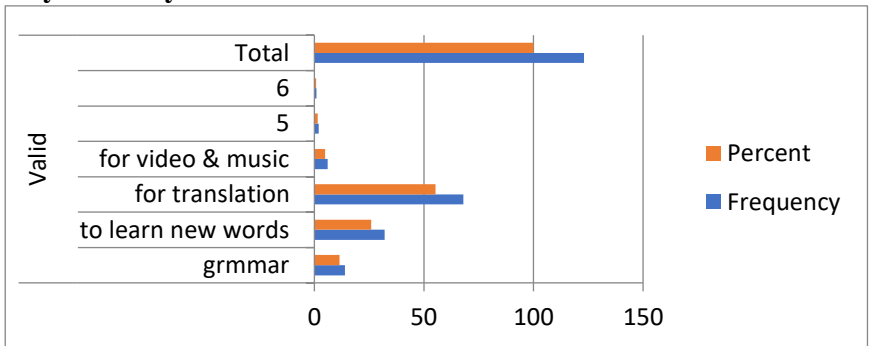


Table 2

Findings also suggest that 82 percent of all participants use Smartphone to learn English at home. Look at table 3, for a detailed description.

Where do mostly use your Smartphone?

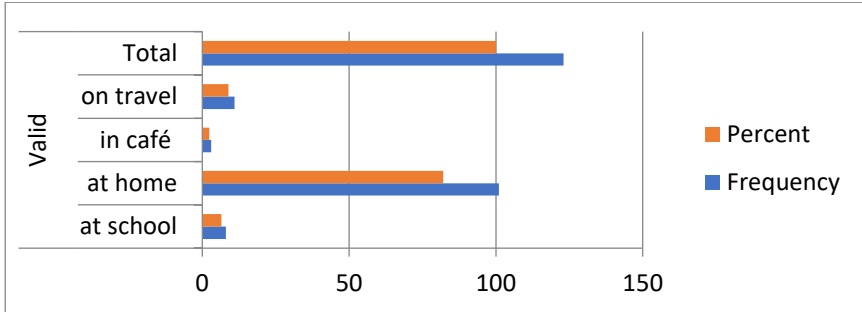


Table 3

Results of the research also suggest that Smartphone use in education can have negative effect either on learning or in health related issues. Thus, 79 percent of all participants in the research think that the uncontrolled way or the long way of Smartphone use can cause harmful effects on eyes. Look at table 4, for a detailed description.

Do you think that long use of Smartphone can be harmful to any of the following?

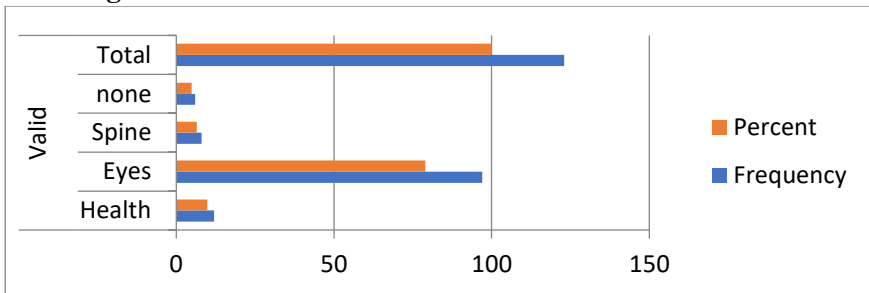


Table 4

Findings of the questionnaire suggest that around 46 percent of all participants think that the long way and irrelevant use of Smartphone can have negative effect on learning outcomes. Look at table 5, for a detailed description.

Do you think that using your Smartphone for a long time and inadequately can have any negative effect on learning?

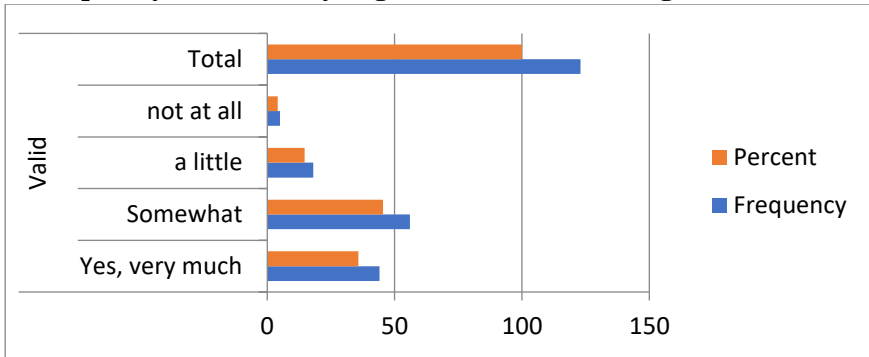


Table 5

Discussions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the questionnaire it became clear that Smartphone use in education can have positive impact on learning. However, if they are not used adequately and in a controlled way they can have negative impact not only in education but also in health related issues. Thus, according to the findings of the questionnaire 65 percent of all participants in the research think that an adequate use of Smartphone can help them in their attempts to learn English language. These findings are also supported by other researchers such as Chi-Yen Chiu (2015) who claimed, that Smartphone use in language learning can be of great benefits especially in vocabulary acquisition, spelling and pronunciation, grammar, listening and reading skills.

In addition, findings of the research showed that 55 percent of all participants use Smartphone for translation of words or text, 26 percent of them use Smartphone for vocabulary and around 11 percent of them use it for grammar. These findings are supported also by a study conducted 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.

Furthermore, based on the findings of the research it was revealed that 82 percent of all participants used Smartphone at home.

However, as stated above, Smartphone use in education can have negative effect either on learning or in health related issues. Thus, based on the findings of the research it was found that 46 percent of all participants think that the uncontrolled way, and long time of use of Smartphone can lead to negative effects on learning, that is, if used inadequately or the irrelevant use of it can rather take your time than help you in learning. The findings find support also by other educators, such as Town (2013) who suggests the negative impact of using Smartphones in education is related to learners' achievement, as learners may become addicted to playing games, chatting or talking to their peers, and this in fact might be considered as a waste of time rather than learning.

And finally, findings of the research also suggest that Smartphone use can also have harmful effect in health related issues, thus 79 percent of all participants think that the inadequate use of Smartphone or either the uncontrolled and long time use of Smartphone can have harmful effects on eyes. Similar research studies suggest the same, so according to Britt, (2013), using Smartphone for a long period of time and at a close distance may also cause symptoms of eye strain or eye fatigue. Wilson (2012) also suggests that using Smartphone in a bad position such as keeping your arms bent, head looking forward in a bent position can cause pain in the neck and spine, as cited in the literature review.

Recommendations

As the findings of the research show in order to benefit from Smartphone use in education in general, and language learning in particular one need to have in mind the following:

1. Use it at short period of time and for learning purpose
2. Use Smartphone applications which enable 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.

Limitations:

Like other studies in the world, this research is followed by certain limitations. Such limitations include:

1. Small number of participants in the research
2. It missed the qualitative approach of the research which would lead to have better understanding over the Smartphone use in education.
3. As no interviews with experts from language learning fields were realized, we have no idea over their perception using Smartphone in language learning area.

VI. Conclusions

As findings of the research suggest using Smartphone and other mobile learning technologies one can benefit a lot, as they offer language learning opportunities everywhere, and this is due to their portal and connectivity ability. However, if they are used out of control or outside of standards and not in compliance with learning objectives they can do more harm than good to our educational purpose.

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