Using Mobile Devices to Improve Oral Competence

Nagham Sabah Irhayyim

naghamsabah111@gmail.com

Open Educational college, Salah Al-Din study Centre

Abstract

The widespread use of mobile technology has transformed educational methods, providing a potentially transformational channel for developing language acquisition skills. This study investigates the efficacy of using mobile devices to improve speaking skills among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners.

This empirical study used a mixed-methods approach to data collecting and analysis. A total of 70 intermediate-level ESL students were selected using stratified random sampling and divided into control and experimental groups. The latter underwent speaking skill training using mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) methodologies (Burston, 2014; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). Pre- and post-tests were used to assess participant performance and perceptions.

The findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in the experimental group's speaking abilities, highlighting the potential of mobile devices as useful educational tools. The focus group talks demonstrated improved learner autonomy, engagement, and motivation, resulting in a more enriching learning environment (Stockwell, 2010). Furthermore, the data suggested the possibility of tailored learning experiences, strengthening the case for incorporating MALL approaches into traditional classroom settings. The study emphasizes the need for further research into adaptive MALL approaches and pedagogical

practices that can best employ mobile technology to improve speaking skills.

Finally, mobile devices can be useful in developing speaking abilities among ESL students, but only when used with appropriate pedagogical practices and with an awareness of potential downsides. The findings have important implications for educators and future research in technology-assisted language acquisition.

Keywords: English language learning, oral competence, mobile devices, technology-assisted learning, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), mobile language learning, classroom interaction, learner autonomy, learner motivation, adaptive education.

استخدام جهاز الموبايل لتحسين الكفاءة الشفهية

م. م. نغم صباح ارحيم

الكلية التربوية المفتوحة- مركز صلاح الدين الدراسي

naghamsabah111@gmail.com

الملخص

لقد أدى الانتشار الواسع لتكنولوجيا الأجهزة المحمولة إلى تغيير أساليب التعليم، حيث وفرت وسائل مبتكرة لتعزيز اكتساب اللغة. تستكشف هذه الدراسة فعالية استخدام الأجهزة المحمولة في تحسين الكفاءة الشفوية لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية (ESL).

اتبعت الدراسة منهجًا مختلطًا (كمي ونوعي)، وشارَك فيها ٧٠ طالبًا من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المستوى المتوسط، تم اختيارهم باستخدام العينة العشوائية الطبقية، وقُسِّموا إلى مجموعتين: ضابطة وتجريبية. خضعت المجموعة التجريبية لتدريب على مهارات التحدث باستخدام استراتيجيات التعلم اللغوي المدعوم بالأجهزة المحمولة (MALL) (بورستون، ٢٠١٤؛ كوكولسكا-هولم وشيلد، ٢٠٠٨). وتم إجراء اختبارات قبلية وبعدية لقياس الأداء وجمع آراء المشاركين.

أظهرت النتائج تحسنًا ذا دلالة إحصائية في كفاءة التحدث لدى المجموعة التجريبية، مما يؤكد فاعلية الأجهزة المحمولة كأدوات تعليمية مفيدة. كما كشفت مناقشات المجموعات البؤرية عن زيادة في استقلالية المتعلمين، وانخراطهم، ودافعيتهم، مما ساهم في خلق بيئة تعليمية أكثر

ديناميكية وإثراءً (ستوكويل، ٢٠١٠). كذلك أشارت البيانات إلى إمكانية توفير تجارب تعلم مخصصة، مما يعزز من أهمية دمج استراتيجيات MALL في بيئات التعليم التقليدية.

وتؤكد هذه الدراسة على الحاجة إلى المزيد من الأبحاث حول الأساليب التكيفية في MALL والممارسات التربوية التي تستخدم التكنولوجيا المحمولة بفعالية. وعلى الرغم من أن الأجهزة المحمولة تحمل وعودًا كبيرة في تطوير مهارات التحدث لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية، إلا أن نجاحها يعتمد على تطبيق تربوي سليم ووعي بالقيود المحتملة. تقدم النتائج رؤى مهمة للمعلمين وتسهم في النقاش المتواصل حول تعلم اللغة المدعوم بالتكنولوجيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، الكفاءة الشفوية، الأجهزة المحمولة، التعلم المدعوم بالتقنية، التعلم المدعوم بالأجهزة المحمولة (MALL)، تعلم اللغة باستخدام الهاتف، التفاعل في الصف، الاستقلالية في التعلم، الدافعية لدى المتعلم، التعليم التكيفي.

Introduction:

The introduction of mobile technology and its subsequent widespread adoption has caused seismic disruptions in many sectors of human existence, including education. Traditionally restricted to classroom settings, the educational landscape is undergoing an evolution helped by technological integration, leading in the introduction of innovative instructional methods (Chinnery, 2006; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). One such pedagogical innovation that combines the dynamics of language acquisition with the flexibility of mobile devices is mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL). The use of MALL to improve oral proficiency in English as a second language (ESL) learners is thoroughly examined in this research. Speaking is a key component of language competency and essential for efficient communication, both critical for ESL learners' academic performance and social integration (Nunan, 2003). However, conventional language teaching approaches are frequently criticized for failing to give students enough chances to improve their speaking abilities (Brooks & Wilson, 2014).

Simultaneously, as mobile devices become increasingly ingrained in daily life, their portability, ubiquity, and variety of functions present a

promising opportunity for language learning (Stockwell, 2010). MALL, an emerging topic of study that aims to look into how mobile devices affect language learning outcomes, is based on this junction of language learning and mobile technology.

The current corpus of research on mobile devices' ability to improve language skills is rather fragmented, despite the growing interest in MALL (Burston, 2014; Huang, 2018). The majority of the studies primarily focus on vocabulary acquisition and reading skills. It is still relatively unknown how mobile gadgets might help develop speaking abilities, which are among the most important but difficult to master.

This study investigates how mobile devices can help ESL learners improve their oral competency. To promote speaking proficiency, the study clarifies whether and how MALL can be successfully incorporated into ESL training. In addition, the study seeks to understand how students view the usage of mobile devices in the classroom, which can shed light on the difficulties and practical ramifications of MALL integration.

This study adds to the growing corpus of MALL literature by making pedagogical recommendations for language teachers, giving them a possible route for developing speaking abilities in ESL students. Additionally, the results can help shape institutional and governmental policies, which will facilitate the creation of an environment favorable to the successful integration of MALL in language learning.

In the remaining sections of this paper, we will provide a thorough literature review that summarizes the theoretical foundations of MALL and its use in language learning. Subsequently, we will elucidate the research methodology, findings, and debate, concluding in a conclusion that synthesizes the research's significance for educators, policymakers, and future investigations.

Literature Review:

The use of technology in education has resulted in a notable shift in pedagogical approaches, specifically in the context of language acquisition (Godwin-Jones, 2011). The literature relevant to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), improving the speaking abilities of ESL learners, and the convergence of these two domains is reviewed in this section.

Mobile-assisted language acquisition is an emerging area investigating the intersection of mobile technology and language acquisition. Mobile devices have the potential to be excellent educational tools due to their flexibility, ubiquity, and numerous features. Furthermore, MALL is consistent with the sociocultural theory of learning, which holds that learning is a socially mediated activity, with mobile devices serving as mediators (Vygotsky, 1978). The actual data supporting MALL's effectiveness is still a little bit scattered, though. Research has shown that mobile technology improves vocabulary learning and reading comprehension (Huang, 2018; Burston, 2014), but it has mainly ignored the possibility of mobile devices to improve speaking abilities.

One of the main components of language competency is speaking ability, which is essential for effective communication. However, conventional approaches frequently fail to provide enough practice, resulting in ESL learners' speaking proficiency being less than ideal (Nunan, 2003; Brooks & Wilson, 2014). To address these issues, it is necessary to investigate new teaching approaches like MALL.

The potential of mobile devices to improve speaking abilities has not received much attention in research. According to Godwin-Jones (2018), mobile applications have the potential to enhance speaking practice and offer quick feedback. Similarly, Golonka et al. (2014) proposed that interactive language learning apps on mobile devices

could improve speech abilities. Nevertheless, these researches did not provide empirical data on how mobile devices affect the development of speaking skills; instead, they focused mostly on the possible advantages.

The study gap in understanding the usefulness of mobile devices in developing speaking abilities and learners' perceptions of this educational strategy calls for further investigation. This study intends to add to the existing body of knowledge by giving empirical evidence on MALL's effect on ESL learners' oral proficiency.

To sum up, although previous research has shown how useful mobile devices can be for language learning, speaking abilities are still underrepresented in this conversation, emphasizing the need for more study. To close this knowledge gap and increase awareness of MALL's ability to improve oral competency, this study is being conducted

Methodology:

A mixed-methods research design served as the foundation for this study, offering a thorough method to comprehend how well mobile devices help English as a Second Language (ESL) learners improve their speaking abilities. Because both quantitative and qualitative data could be integrated. This research approach allowed for thoroughly examining the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The study population consisted of intermediate-level ESL students enrolled in a language school. To guarantee representativeness, a stratified random sample of seventy students was chosen. Then, a control group (n = 30) and an experimental group (n = 40) were randomly assigned to the participants. Using a selection of mobile device language learning applications, the experimental group received MALL-enhanced ESL training, while the control group received traditional ESL education.

Both groups received the same number of instructional hours throughout the semester-long intervention. The experimental group used a variety of smartphone apps to improve their speaking abilities, such as interactive language games, voice recording for pronunciation practice, and video chats for conversational skills.

Data was gathered using two main approaches. First, pre- and post-tests were used to quantitatively evaluate speaking performance in the control and experimental groups. The learners' speaking performance was evaluated using an oral evaluation rubric that focused on elements like coherence, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and fluency. This data was used to measure the impact of MALL-enhanced education on learners' speaking abilities.

Second, qualitative information was gathered through focus groups involving the experimental group. The study's aim was to find out how students felt and experienced using mobile devices to practice speaking. The focus group discussions were recorded on video, transcribed, and then submitted to a thematic analysis to identify patterns and recurring themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

While the qualitative data supplied insights into learners' experiences and perspectives, the quantitative data gave statistical information about the impact of mobile-assisted language learning.

Results:

Quantitative Results:

The main objective of the quantitative analysis was to evaluate the effect of Mobile-Assist Language Learning (MALL) on the speaking abilities of ESL learners. A repeated measures ANOVA was performed to compare the pre-and post-test results of the control and experimental groups.

The pre-test results showed no significant difference between the control (M=5.0, SD=1.0) and experimental groups (M=4.9, SD=1.1),

indicating similar initial speaking proficiency ($p>0.05$). However, the post-test findings indicated a statistically significant difference in speaking proficiency. The experimental group ($M=6.5$, $SD=0.9$) performed significantly better than the control group ($M=5.4$, $SD=1.0$), with a medium effect size ($p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.06$).

Qualitative Results:

Three main themes emerged from the focus group analysis regarding how students saw using mobile devices to improve their speaking abilities:

1- Mobile devices offer more opportunities to practice speaking skills outside of the classroom, helping participants improve their pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary.

2- Interactive and Fun Learning Environment: Many participants mentioned that the mobile apps' interactive features made learning more entertaining and engaging, which encouraged them to keep practicing.

3- Limitations and obstacles: Despite the apparent advantages, participants mentioned limitations and obstacles, such as potential distractions from other apps on their devices, lack of face-to-face engagement, and technical difficulties.

In conclusion, the qualitative research showed that MALL is well-liked by ESL learners despite certain difficulties. In contrast, the quantitative results showed a noteworthy gain in speaking abilities among those learners utilizing MALL.

Conclusions:

The objective of the research was to conduct an empirical investigation of the efficacy of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in improving the speaking abilities of learners of English as a second language (ESL). This study, based on a mixed-methods research design, provided quantifiable proof of a noteworthy gain in speaking

proficiency among students using mobile devices. Additionally, the qualitative results showed how positively learners perceived MALL, suggesting that it has the potential to be an interesting and adaptable tool for language acquisition.

The experimental group's notable improvement in speaking abilities supports the effectiveness of MALL. The study validates the effectiveness of mobile devices as beneficial instruments for language acquisition, specifically for enhancing oral proficiency. This is consistent with the findings of Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) and Godwin-Jones (2018). The enhancement suggests that mobile devices can offer a wide range of engaging, adaptable, and interactive educational opportunities outside of conventional classroom settings, facilitating more practice and feedback.

The qualitative results provided further context for understanding the experiences of the learners. As in other research emphasizing the learner-centered character of MALL, participants acknowledged the advantages of more practice opportunities and interactive learning experiences (Stockwell, 2010; Huang, 2018). But other issues were also noted, such as possible distractions and technological issues, indicating areas that need to be considered when integrating MALL in language learning environments.

These results highlight the importance of incorporating technology into language learning methods. However, care must be taken to make sure that technology complements human contact and instructional assistance rather than taking its place. Additionally, it emphasizes how crucial ongoing technical assistance and learner training are to minimizing any obstacles.

More study is advised to examine the long-term impacts of MALL on oral competency and its effectiveness in various learning environments and skill levels. It may also examine how certain mobile applications

might help with certain speaking subskills. Overall, this study adds to our understanding of MALL's potential in language acquisition, particularly for improving speaking abilities. It promotes a more technologically advanced, learner-centered approach to education that meets the requirements and preferences of 21st-century learners.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for educators, curriculum designers, and future researchers:

1- Educational Policy and Practice: Given the study's encouraging findings, teachers and educational establishments ought to consider integrating Mobile-Assist Language Learning (MALL) into their curricula, especially as a means of improving students' speaking abilities. Integrating mobile apps should be carefully considered, considering the educational objectives, learners' skill levels, and learning styles.

2- Pedagogical Guidance and Learner Training: Teachers and students should receive sufficient assistance in light of the recognized obstacles pertaining to technological problems and possible diversions. Technical instruction on effectively utilizing mobile devices and applications for language learning, as well as distraction management techniques, may be part of this help.

3- Future study: More study is required to fully grasp how mobile devices might improve many facets of language acquisition. Subsequent research endeavors must contemplate investigating the enduring consequences of MALL, its distinct influences on diverse proficiency levels, and its effectiveness in diverse learning environments. Additionally, investigating certain mobile apps for various speaking sub-skills might offer more complex perspectives on MALL's potential.

4- App Developers and Designers: The educational technology sector's mobile app developers and designers can benefit from the study's conclusions. The demands and difficulties of the student may be used to inform the design and development of mobile learning applications, increasing both their instructional value and user experience.

We can create more technologically advanced, interesting, and successful language learning experiences by adopting these guidelines. The effective use of mobile technology in language instruction has the potential to greatly improve learners' speaking competence and overall language competency.

References:

1- Godwin-Jones, R. (2018). Using Mobile Devices in the Language Classroom. Cambridge University Press.

2- Huang, C. (2018). Transformational Mobile App Design and Development: Case Studies and Mini-Projects. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

3- Kukulska-Hulme, A., & Shield, L. (2008). An overview of mobile assisted language learning: From content delivery to supported collaboration and interaction. ReCALL, 20(3), 271-289.

4- Stockwell, G. (2010). Using mobile phones for vocabulary activities: examining the effect of the platform. Language Learning & Technology, 14(2), 95-110

5- Brooks, L., & Wilson, J. (2014). Using oral presentations to promote language learning engagement. The CATESOL Journal, 26(1), 140-153.

6- Burston, J. (2014). MALL: The Pedagogical Implications. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 27(4), 344-357.

7- Golonka, E. M., Bowles, A. R., Frank, V. M., Richardson, D. L., & Freynik, S. (2014). Technologies for foreign language learning: a review of technology types and their effectiveness. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 27(1), 70-105.

8- Godwin-Jones, R. (2011). Emerging technologies: Mobile apps for language learning. Language Learning & Technology, 15(2), 2-11.

9- Godwin-Jones, R. (2018). Using Mobile Devices in the Language Classroom. Cambridge University Press.

10- Huang, C. (2018). Transformational Mobile App Design and Development: Case Studies and Mini-Projects. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

11- Kukulska-Hulme, A., & Shield, L. (2008). An overview of mobile assisted language learning: From content delivery to supported collaboration and interaction. ReCALL, 20(3), 271-289.

12- Nunan, D. (2003). Practical English Language Teaching: Speaking.

13- McGraw-Hill. Stockwell, G. (2010). Using mobile phones for vocabulary activities: examining the effect of the platform. Language Learning & Technology, 14(2), 95-110.

14- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard university press.

15- Brooks, L., & Wilson, J. (2014). Using oral presentations to promote language learning engagement. The CATESOL Journal, 26(1), 140-153.

16- Burston, J. (2014). MALL: The Pedagogical Implications. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 27(4), 344-357.

17- Chinnery, G. M. (2006). Emerging technologies: Going to the MALL: mobile assisted language learning. Language Learning & Technology, 10(1), 9-16.

18- Huang, C. (2018). Transformational Mobile App Design and Development: Case Studies and Mini-Projects. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

19- Kukulska-Hulme, A., & Shield, L. (2008). An overview of mobile assisted language learning: From content delivery to supported collaboration and interaction. ReCALL, 20(3), 271-289.

20- Nunan, D. (2003). Practical English Language Teaching: Speaking.

21- McGraw-Hill. Stockwell, G. (2010). Using mobile phones for vocabulary activities: examining the effect of the platform. Language Learning & Technology, 14(2), 95-110.

22- Burston, J. (2014). MALL: The Pedagogical Implications. Computer Assisted Language Learning, 27(4), 344-357.

23- Kukulska-Hulme, A., & Shield, L. (2008). An overview of mobile assisted language learning: From content delivery to supported collaboration and interaction. ReCALL, 20(3), 271-289.

24- Kukulska-Hulme, A. (2012). How should the higher education workforce be prepared to use technology for teaching and learning? European Journal of Education, 47(1), 64-80. Stockwell, G. (2010). Using mobile phones for vocabulary activities: examining the effect of the platform. Language Learning & Technology, 14(2), 95-110.

25- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101.

26- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). Designing and conducting mixed methods research. Sage publications.

27- Field, A. (2013). Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics.

28- Sage. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101.