

Utility of Mobile Technology in English Language Learning: A Pakistani Perspective

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Abstract

The research describes the perceptions of learners about the use of mobile technology for improving the English language. This study shows that with the development of mobile devices, English language learning apps can be easily downloaded and their availability enables the learners to learn the English language by themselves at any time and in any place. This indicates how swiftly the mobile technology has made its way into the educational set up. Mobile assisted language learning is a modern approach for Pakistani language learners to learn the English language independently. Qualitative and quantitative research was done and 100 students from 2 different universities participated in this study. The results and findings showed that when the mobile apps are used for English language learning, it gives a very positive effect on English language learners. The results of the study showed that English language learners of Pakistan are using many mobile apps and getting positive results. Hence, it is proven that using mobile apps for learning the English language plays an effective and positive role in Pakistan.

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Key words: Mobile technology, English language learning, Pakistani perspective

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Many years ago, mobile technologies were claimed to be a familiar part of both students and teachers life (Facer, 2004). And eventually, every soul in this world is living with computer and mobile technologies. Mobile technology has enhanced the learning power, educational goals and achievements of the learners. It is helping and fulfilling the needs of learners by providing them every kind of information they are looking for (Hulme, 2005). The whole world including Pakistan is rapidly joining the race of technology and thus getting access to advanced digital tools for language teaching and learning. Commonly, computer and mobile technologies have changed the teaching and learning process in our society (Pavlik, 2015). This tendency indicates how Pakistani English language learners have empowered themselves to cope up with the educational challenges with the help of Smartphone applications. The literature review and the results of the study show that the learning of English through multiple mobile apps has increased tremendously with very promising results in Pakistani society.

1.2 Research Question

This study aimed to answer the following question

- How mobile apps assist in English language learning in Pakistan?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Self-regulated learning theory by Zimmerman (2002), formulated the theoretical background of this study. In this theory, three interrelated phases which are forethought phase, performance phase and self-reflection phase have been proposed which allow learners to assess and evaluate their performances by themselves. During the use of apps to learn, the students are more likely to try to complete the study task independently.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

MALL (mobile assisted language learning) is a new approach to getting knowledge about language in which learning takes place by using mobile technology. In a mobile-assisted language learning environment, learners are not bound to sit in a classroom or in front of computers to learn something. “But in actual, MALL can be the ideal solution to those who have learning barricade regarding time and place (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012). This modern trend offers the learners the mixture of accessibility, interlinked activities, flexibility with the smartphone applications which are quite different from the other typical and old technologies which are used in classrooms (Liu, Tan, & Chu, 2009)”. This combination provides the learners every possibility of understanding more about their previous knowledge and had a chance to connect it with their new learnings and knowledge too, and with the connection of their learnings students will be able to develop more problem-solving skills in the hem (Liu, Tan, & Chu, 2009, Liu, Navarrete &Wivagg, 2014). Furthermore, mobile-assisted language learning had introduced many interesting and noticeable benefits to the learners. Learners can use any mobile app on mobile phones to learn English or any other language. They can read blogs, watch and learn from tutorials, listen to English records and use social apps for improving their communication skills. They can pause, skip, rewind, or fast forward the learning material as they are desired. MALL allows the learners to learn the English language through self-regulated learning. It allows learners to manage their every learning process by themselves (Banister, 2010). MALL can give strength to collaboration and co-construction of knowledge. When learners gain knowledge, they intend to share their knowledge with their friends or class fellows, so that they can hold and understand the whole content of the problem (Kukulska & Shield, 2007). As Liu, Maradiegue& Navarrete (2014) concluded: “The wide-ranging, various resources and capabilities to sustain English language education were made available by mobile devices”. Also Kukulska & Shield (2007) was focusing on listening and speaking skills and they discovered that “MALL is expanding at the speed of two or three years from a teacher-learner, text-based education environment to one that is beginning to support multimedia, collaborative listening and speaking activities and to allow students to co-construct knowledge to figure out

problems and fill information gaps. Chinnery (2006) “comprehensively reported mobile devices to have effective influences for language learning. Furthermore, some researches pay attention to the pedagogical methods that brought by using apps in mobile devices. These mobile devices have an increasing and growing collaborative approach and a self-regulated approach. For example, exchanging the academic ideas on WhatsApp for discussing a project with partners on mobile phones might be encouraging collaboration. Humle (2009) also stated that learners need to be guided to use smartphones effectively for learning purposes. So, proper training and pedagogical framework is a must to take advantage of learning via mobile apps. Learning through mobile phones is admirable and motivating as it enables the learners to direct their own learning process and generate their learning date. It is contrary to the traditional language classrooms where learners are passive agents and keep waiting for the teachers to provide them with the learning sources Mobinizad (2018).

According to Winne (1995), self-regulated learning is a constructive and self-directed process. Zimmerman (2002) also states that a self-regulation is a self-directive machine by way of which inexperienced persons transform their mental competencies into instructional competencies

Zimmerman (2002) presented six components of self-regulation:

- Adopting powerful strategies for attaining the goals
- Monitoring one's performance selectively for signs of progress
- Restructuring one's physical and social context to make it compatible with one's goals
- Managing one's time use efficiently
- Self-evaluating one's methods
- Attributing causation to results and adapting future methods.

3. METHODOLOGY

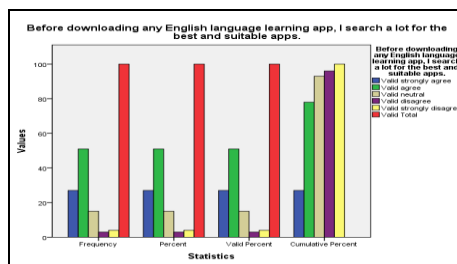
The researcher used a quantitative research method. In the quantitative research method, the data is collected through surveys questionnaires, polls and so on. In this research, the researcher collected the data through a questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised both close-ended and open-ended questions. The collected data was analyzed by using SPSS. The statistical analysis has been demonstrated through the bar graphs and the tables.

The research paradigm of this study was quantitative. Required data was collected through questionnaires. The questionnaire was designed to conduct the relevant data and the five points Likert scale questionnaire was used in the research work. It helped the researcher in getting precise results. The data was collected under natural circumstances. The study population was the University students of the English language. The data was collected from both the private and government sectors of education. The University of Lahore was chosen for the data collection which is a private sector and data was also gathered from Punjab University which is a government sector. Both of these universities are located in Lahore, Pakistan. The questionnaire was given to 115 students but only 100 of them responded. The maximum of the data was obtained through the close-ended questions because the entire respondents answered them conveniently. But on the other hand, only a few respondents answered the open-ended questions.

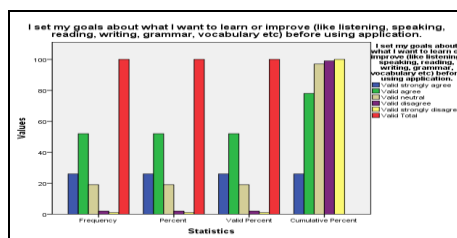
4. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

In data analysis, data which was collected through the questionnaires was analyzed by the researcher. In this study, data analysis has been done by using SPSS version 24.0. The analysis report of this study confirmed that English language learning mobile apps are beneficial for the students and English language learners. The collected data was examined methodically and in detail through descriptive statistics. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Total 15 questions were asked in which first 4 questions were related to the forethought phase, next 4 questions were related to the performance phase and the last 4 questions were about the self-reflection phase. The first 12 questions were close-ended whereas the other 3 questions were open-ended questions from each phase of self-regulated learning. The options of close-ended questions were according to Likert scale of five. The data coding was done before data analysis. Each code of the Likert scale was assigned one value. The arrangement of the codes was according to the order of numerical values of the codes from 1 to 5, based on the Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree). The analysis of the items was accomplished using frequencies, percentages, mean, median, mode and standard deviation.

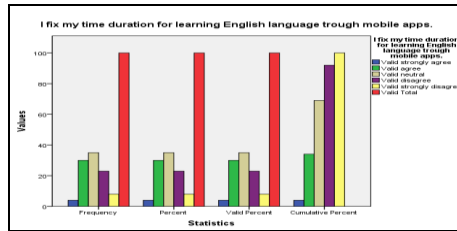
Data were analyzed by using SPSS version 24.0. The findings of the data collection confirmed that it is beneficial for the English language learners to learn language through English language learning mobile apps. The questionnaire was given to 100 students. The collected data was examined methodically and in detail through descriptive statistics. For the open-ended questions, thematic analysis was chosen. Frequencies, percentage, valid percent and cumulative percent are shown the frequency graphs. Mean, std. error of mean, median, mode, std. deviation and variance are shown in the statistics table.



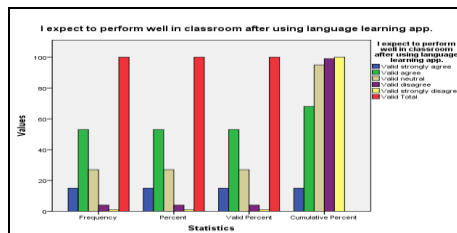
According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 27% strongly agreed and 51% somewhat agreed with the statement that before downloading any English language learning app, I search a lot for the best and suitable apps. While 15% decided to stay neutral, 3% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed with this statement.



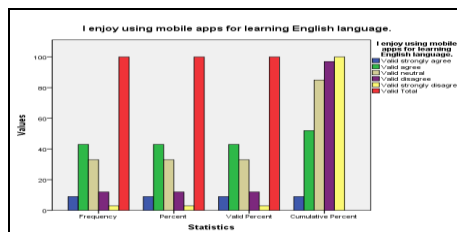
According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 26% strongly agreed and 52% somewhat agreed with the statement that I set my goals about what I want to learn or improve (like listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary etc) before using the application. While 19% decided to stay neutral, 2% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed.



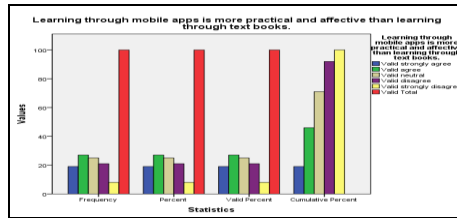
According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 4% strongly agreed and 30% somewhat agreed with the statement that I fix my time duration for learning English language through mobile apps. While 35% decided to stay neutral, 23% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed with this statement.



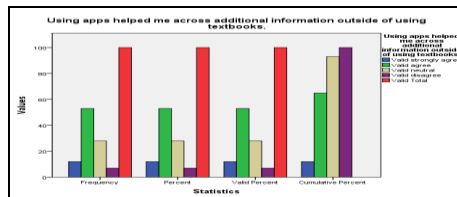
According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 15% strongly agreed and 53% somewhat agreed with the statement that I expect to perform well in the classroom after using the language learning app. While 27% decided to stay neutral, 4% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed with this statement.



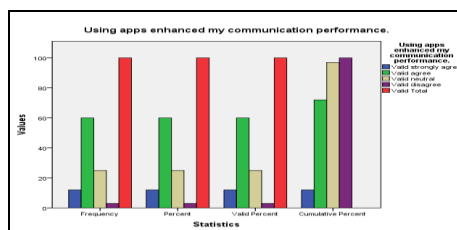
According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 9% strongly agreed and 43% somewhat agreed with the statement that I enjoy using mobile apps for learning the English language. While 33% decided to stay neutral, 12% disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed with this statement.



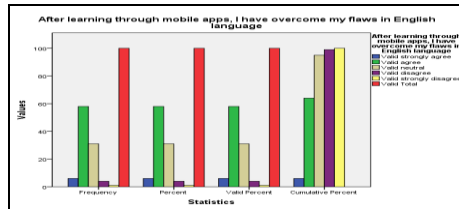
According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 19% strongly agreed and 27% somewhat agreed with the statement that Learning through mobile apps is more practical and effective than learning through textbooks. While 25% decided to stay neutral, 21% disagreed and 8% strongly disagreed with this statement.



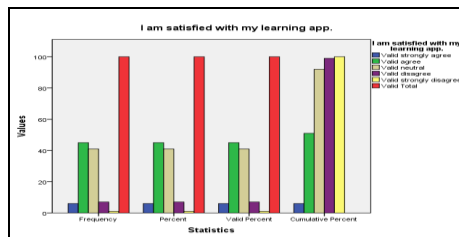
According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 12% strongly agreed and 53% somewhat agreed with the statement that Using apps helped me access additional information outside of using textbooks. While 28% decided to stay neutral, 7% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed with this statement.



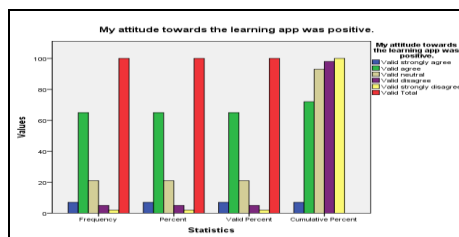
According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 12% strongly agreed and 60% somewhat agreed with the statement that using apps enhanced my communication performance. While 25% decided to stay neutral, 3% disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed with this statement.



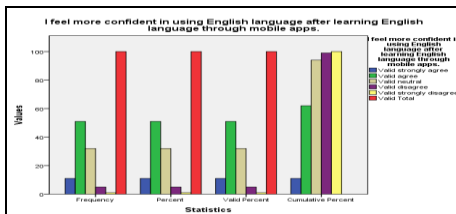
According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 6% strongly agreed and 58% somewhat agreed with the statement that after learning through mobile apps, I have overcome my flaws in the English language. While 31% decided to stay neutral, 4% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed with this statement.



According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 6% strongly agreed and 45% somewhat agreed with the statement that I am satisfied with my learning app. While 41% decided to stay neutral, 7% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed with this statement.



According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 7% strongly agreed and 65% somewhat agreed with the statement that my attitude towards the learning app was positive. While 21% decided to stay neutral, 5% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed with this statement.



According to the above graph, out of 100 respondents, 11% strongly agreed and 51% somewhat agreed with the statement that I feel more confident in using the English language after learning the English language through mobile apps. While 32% decided to stay neutral, 5% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed with this statement.

4.1 Analysis of Open-Ended Questions

The open-ended questions were from each phase of self-regulated learning. The very first open-ended question was ‘which the English language learning through mobile apps would you like to prefer more and why?’. Many participants preferred U-Dictionary app. It is a dictionary and translator app, which can translate between two languages from 108 languages so, learners found it more helping for them. One respondent told that she would like to prefer YouTube app. By watching English subtitled videos she can improve her English language. Some participants said that social apps like Facebook, Instagram, Skype, WhatsApp, Snapchat are very helpful in improving the English language. The second open-ended question was ‘how many skills do you learn from mobile apps?’ One respondent said that his vocabulary and grammar was enhanced by the use of mobile apps. Other respondents said the use of mobile apps had significantly improved grammar, spellings, reading and writing skills. The last open-ended question was ‘do you think English language learning through mobile apps motivate task persistence?’ the responses to this question were also in the favour of the use of Smartphone apps as a fine source of learning and enhancing English language skill.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, the effects of mobile applications as an English language learning tool for the English language learners of Pakistan were investigated. Results and findings showed that the use of mobile

apps has a considerable effect on the English language learning. The results of the open-ended questions showed that English language learners of Pakistan are more likely to be positively involved in learning through mobile apps. The participants were more likely to be motivated and felt more interested in using mobile apps for learning the English language because it promotes self-assessment and self-evaluation which leads the learner to the self-regulated cycle of learning (Kitsantas & Dabbagh, 2010, Hadwin & Winne, 2001; Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2004). Learners had mostly learned the English language by using U-Dictionary app, which helps to translate your language in English and also provides the meaning of the words which the user is searching for. Apart from U-Dictionary, many learners had tried to improve their English language skills by talking to someone else on social apps or by watching subtitled videos on YouTube. Learning becomes fun for the learners and they enjoy using mobile apps for learning purposes. Therefore the study recommends the utilization of mobile apps as an effective and fun learning tool in the educational sphere of Pakistan.

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