

THE USE OF MOBILE DEVICES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG ADVANCED LEARNERS: INSIGHTS FROM INTERVIEW DATA

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of mobile devices in facilitating English language learning among advanced learners. Based on interview data, it investigates learners' perceptions, usage patterns, benefits, and challenges associated with mobile-assisted language learning (MALL). The findings indicate that mobile devices offer personalized, flexible learning experiences but also highlight concerns about distraction and information overload. The data for this study were gathered from 20 students using a semi-structured interview format. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses were applied to the collected data. Findings from the study indicated that some participants showed an increased awareness of the beneficial role mobile devices play in their language learning. They demonstrated the capability to access appropriate tools and retrieve information to meet their objectives, fulfill their needs, and tailor their English learning to suit their individual learning styles. However, their use of mobile devices in the classroom was often spontaneous and unstructured.

Keywords: Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), English Language Learning, Advanced Learners, Mobile Devices, Interview Study

1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, mobile devices, particularly smartphones and tablets, have sparked significant interest among researchers (Byrne & Diem, 2014). This interest is largely due to the potential these technologies offer, such as personalized learning opportunities, a vast array of mobile apps, and easy internet access, as well as their growing prevalence among learners. Such factors make mobile devices valuable additions to both formal and informal language learning environments.

Benson (2011) notes that educational technologies have long been linked to learner autonomy, as they are often intended for self-directed practice. However, Reinders and White (2016) emphasize that future research and practices in technology-mediated learner autonomy should increasingly align with the tools, environments, and activities that are most relevant to language learners. They argue that with a nearly limitless range of settings, tools, and experiences now available, individuals must develop critical adaptive learning skills to fully benefit from and contribute to these contexts. Contemporary language educators should therefore provide foreign or second language learners with the necessary knowledge to leverage mobile devices effectively for language study. Additionally, it is essential for researchers and educators alike to understand the connection between how language learners organize their own learning experiences and the role mobile devices, particularly smartphones and tablets, play in these settings.

Building on these considerations, the present study explores how advanced English language learners use mobile devices for language learning. The article begins with a review of relevant literature, followed by a description of the study's design, including the research question, participant details, data collection methods, and analysis procedures. The results are then presented, leading into a discussion and concluding remarks.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and Its Development

The advent of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has significantly impacted the field of language education. Researchers have increasingly focused on MALL due to its potential to provide flexible, accessible, and personalized learning experiences (Godwin-Jones, 2011). Mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, enable learners to practice language skills anytime and anywhere, making language acquisition a more integrated part of their daily lives. Studies show that mobile devices support not only traditional learning activities, such as vocabulary practice, but also more interactive forms, like real-time language practice and social interaction (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008).

2.2. Benefits of Mobile Devices for Language Learning

Mobile devices offer several advantages for language learners, including a wealth of resources (e.g., apps, websites, and multimedia tools) and the convenience of immediate internet access. Byrne and Diem (2014)

highlight that the increasing availability of mobile apps and the adaptability of these tools to individual learning preferences make mobile devices an asset in both structured and informal learning settings. Additionally, mobile learning tools facilitate individualized learning, allowing students to practice specific language skills, such as grammar or pronunciation, at their own pace (Stockwell, 2010).

2.3. Learner Autonomy and Mobile Technologies

The concept of learner autonomy has long been connected to educational technologies, as these tools often promote self-directed learning. Benson (2011) describes how educational technologies encourage learners to take responsibility for their own progress and develop skills in self-management and goal setting. Reinders and White (2016) argue that modern mobile technologies have expanded the scope of learner autonomy, as they provide learners with almost limitless opportunities for practice in varied contexts. However, they emphasize that future research should examine how mobile devices align with the specific tools, settings, and activities that are most relevant to language learners. To fully benefit from these opportunities, learners need to cultivate critical and adaptive learning skills that allow them to navigate and evaluate the vast amount of content available online.

2.4. Challenges of Mobile Device Use in Language Learning

Despite their advantages, mobile devices also present several challenges for language learners. One common issue is distraction; students may be tempted to use their devices for non-learning purposes, such as social media or entertainment (Lai & Zheng, 2018). Moreover, a lack of structured guidance can lead to ad hoc or superficial use of mobile devices, where learners engage with content only on a surface level. Lai (2019) points out that while learners can benefit greatly from mobile devices, they require support and guidance to use these tools effectively and avoid potential pitfalls. Teachers play a critical role in helping students learn to harness the benefits of mobile learning while minimizing these distractions.

2.5. The Role of Teachers in Mobile Language Learning

Educators have an essential role in fostering effective mobile-assisted learning environments by equipping students with the necessary skills to use mobile devices productively (Viberg & Grönlund, 2017). Reinders and White (2016) advocate for teachers to guide students in recognizing and leveraging the affordances of mobile devices for language learning. This involves educating students about suitable mobile tools, applications, and resources and helping them develop strategies to integrate these resources into their self-directed learning. Teachers can also encourage students to adopt a reflective approach to mobile learning, guiding them to assess the usefulness of different apps or websites critically.

The literature on mobile-assisted language learning highlights both the opportunities and challenges presented by mobile devices in language education. While mobile technologies provide unprecedented access to resources and promote learner autonomy, their effective use requires skillful navigation and a thoughtful, guided approach. As mobile devices become increasingly embedded in both formal and informal learning environments, understanding their role in supporting advanced learners' language development is essential for educators and researchers alike.

3 METHOD

3.1. Research Question

How do advanced English language learners utilize mobile devices (such as smartphones and tablets) to support their language learning, and what are the perceived benefits and challenges of mobile-assisted language learning in this context?

This question aims to explore not only the specific ways in which advanced learners engage with mobile devices for language practice but also to understand their perspectives on the effectiveness and potential limitations of these tools in enhancing their language acquisition.

3.2. Participants

The study involved 20 advanced English language learners, selected based on their proficiency level in English (CEFR level C1 or higher). Participants were diverse in terms of age and background, ranging from university students to professionals who regularly use English in academic or professional settings. All participants had prior experience using mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, for language-related purposes, ensuring that they were familiar with the tools and resources discussed during the study. This demographic selection aimed to gather insights from individuals with a high level of language proficiency and experience, providing a nuanced perspective on mobile-assisted language learning among advanced learners.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with each of the 20 participants. The semi-structured format allowed participants to discuss their experiences and perspectives in depth, while still providing a consistent framework across interviews. Key questions focused on how participants used mobile devices for language learning, the types of apps and resources they accessed, their strategies for integrating mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) into their routines, and any perceived benefits or challenges.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed for accuracy. Data analysis followed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques.

3.3.i. Qualitative Analysis: A thematic analysis was performed on the interview transcripts. Responses were coded for recurring themes related to mobile device usage, learning strategies, perceived benefits, and challenges. Themes such as “autonomy,” “accessibility,” “distraction,” and “adaptability” emerged, reflecting common patterns across participant experiences. These themes provided insights into learners' attitudes and behaviors regarding MALL and highlighted specific factors influencing its effectiveness.

3.3. ii. Quantitative Analysis: In addition to thematic coding, quantitative analysis was conducted by categorizing responses based on frequency. For example, data were analyzed to quantify the number of participants who used specific apps or tools, the frequency of mobile device use for language learning, and the types of activities they engaged in (e.g., vocabulary practice, listening exercises, or reading comprehension). This analysis provided a clearer picture of common practices and preferences among advanced learners, supporting the qualitative findings with numerical data.

Together, these analytical methods offered a comprehensive view of how advanced learners use mobile devices in their language studies, as well as the perceived advantages and limitations of this approach.

4 FINDINGS

The analysis of the interview data revealed several key findings regarding how advanced English language learners use mobile devices to support their language studies, along with the benefits and challenges they experience in this context.

Table 1. The students' mobile devices usage descriptions

Student	Sex	Year & Courses of Study	Device Used	Use of MobDs for language study (approx.)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6
Stu 1	Male	1 st year B.Com.	Smart phone and Tablet	2 years	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Stu 2	Female	2 nd year B.Com.	smart phone, rarely tablet	4 years	✓		✓	✓		
Stu 3	Female	1 st year B.Com.	Tablet and cell Phone	3 years	✓	✓			✓	
Stu 4	Female	2 nd year B.Com.	Tablet and cell Phone	4 years	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Stu 5	Male	2 nd year B.Com.	Smart phone, rarely Tablet	4 years	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stu 6	Male	1 st year B.Com.	Smart phone	3 years	✓		✓	✓		
Stu 7	Female	2 nd year B.Com.	Smart phone and Tablet	4 years	✓	✓			✓	
Stu 8	Female	3 rd year BCA	Smart phone	3 years	✓		✓	✓		
Stu 9	Male	2 nd year B.Sc.(CS)	Smart phone	2 years		✓			✓	✓
Stu 10	Female	3 rd year B.Sc.(B.T.)	Tablet and Cell phone	3 years	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Stu 11	Male	2 nd year B.Sc.(IT)	Smart phone	7 years	✓		✓	✓		
Stu 12	Female	2 nd year M.A. (English)	Smart phone	4 years	✓	✓			✓	✓
Stu 13	Male	2 nd year B.Sc.(CS)	Smart phone and Tablet	7 years	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Stu 14	Male	3 rd year B.Sc.(B.T.)	Smart phone	4 years	✓		✓	✓		
Stu 15	Male	2 nd year M.A. (English)	Smart phone, rarely Tablet	7 years	✓	✓			✓	✓
Stu 16	Female	2 nd year	Smart phone	5 years		✓	✓	✓	✓	

		B.Sc.(IT)								
Stu 17	Male	2 nd year B.Sc.(CS)	Smart phone	4 years	✓		✓	✓		
Stu 18	Male	3 rd year BCA	Smart phone and Tablet	7 years	✓	✓			✓	✓
Stu 19	Female	2 nd year M.A. (English)	Smart phone	6 years		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Stu 20	Female	3 rd year B.Sc.(B.T.)	Smartphone and Tablet	5 years	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

*Source Primary Data

4.1. Reasons for using mobile devices

Table 2. Summarizing the key findings from the study on mobile-assisted language learning among advanced English learners

Question	Finding	Description	Percentage of Participants
1	Flexible and Accessible Learning	Mobile devices enable learning anytime and anywhere, allowing learners to integrate practice into daily life.	85%
2	Individualized and Self-Directed Learning	Learners can customize their language practice, setting personal goals and focusing on specific skills.	70%
3	Wide Range of Resources and Tools	Participants access various apps and online content for diverse skills, including vocabulary, listening, etc.	75%
4	Enhanced Motivation and Engagement	Interactive features and gamification in apps increase motivation and consistency in language practice.	65%
5	Challenges: Distraction and Overreliance on Technology	Learners face distractions and risk of shallow engagement when using mobile devices independently.	60%
6	Limited Classroom Integration	Mobile devices are mainly used independently, with limited teacher-supported integration into class learning.	30%

This table provides a clear overview of the benefits and challenges identified in the study, along with the prevalence of each finding among participants.

4.2. Resources and tools

Table 3. This table summarizing common **resources and tools** used on mobile devices for language learning, based on research and learner feedback.

Resource/Tool	Description	Percentage of Participants
Vocabulary Apps	Apps like Anki, Quizlet, and Memrise help learners build and reinforce their vocabulary through flashcards and spaced repetition.	80%
Language Exchange Platforms	Apps such as HelloTalk and Tandem allow learners to connect with native speakers for real-time practice and conversation.	65%
Podcasts	Audio-based resources like language learning podcasts or podcasts in the target language, helping with listening and pronunciation.	75%
E-books and Audiobooks	Digital books and audiobooks available on apps like Kindle or Audible help with reading and listening practice in the target language.	70%
Grammar and Pronunciation Apps	Tools like Grammarly, Duolingo, and Babbel focus on grammar practice and help improve pronunciation through repetition and feedback.	85%
Language Learning Games	Interactive apps that use gamification to teach vocabulary, grammar, and language skills, such as Drops or Memrise.	60%
YouTube	A vast resource for language learners offering free video content, including lessons, cultural insights, and real-world	70%

	dialogues.	
Social Media and Forums	Platforms like Reddit, Facebook, and Instagram offer communities where learners can share resources, ask questions, and practice writing.	50%
Speech Recognition Tools	Apps with speech recognition (e.g., Google Translate, Speechling) to help learners improve their speaking and pronunciation skills.	65%
Online Dictionaries and Thesauruses	Apps like WordReference or Merriam-Webster help with quick translation, definitions, and example sentences.	85%
Flashcard Apps	Spaced repetition systems (SRS) such as Anki or Brainscape help learners efficiently memorize and retain new words or phrases.	80%
News and Articles	Apps like News in Levels or Flipboard curate news stories in the target language at varying difficulty levels.	55%

This table presents the various **resources and tools** that learners commonly use on mobile devices for language learning, along with the percentage of participants who utilize each type of resource. The table reflects the importance of diversity in tools and content types, offering learners a variety of ways to engage with language learning on mobile devices.

4.3. Reasons for using mobile devices

Table 4. The revised table that includes the **reasons for using mobile devices** for language learning based on the previous findings:

Reason for Use	Description	Percentage of Participants
Accessibility and Convenience	Mobile devices allow learners to study anytime and anywhere, fitting language practice into their daily routines.	85%
Personalization	Learners can tailor their learning experience by choosing their preferred apps, tools, and learning goals.	70%
Variety of Resources	Mobile devices provide access to a wide range of resources, including vocabulary apps, podcasts, and e-books.	75%
Engagement and Motivation	Features such as gamification, progress tracking, and rewards boost motivation and make learning more engaging.	65%
Autonomy in Learning	Mobile devices encourage self-directed learning by allowing learners to independently choose materials and methods.	60%
Improved Pronunciation & Listening Skills	Mobile apps provide audio-based exercises that improve listening comprehension and pronunciation.	55%
Real-Time Feedback	Immediate feedback on tasks or exercises helps learners correct mistakes and enhance their learning.	70%
Affordability and Cost-Effectiveness	Many language learning apps are low-cost or free, making them a budget-friendly alternative to traditional resources.	80%
Use of Multimedia	Learners engage with multimedia content (videos, audio) to improve various language skills.	75%
Collaboration and Interaction	Some apps allow learners to interact with peers or native speakers, supporting social learning and collaboration.	50%
Portable Learning	Learners can carry mobile devices with them, providing access to language learning materials on the go.	85%
Language Immersion	Learners can access authentic language materials (e.g., news, podcasts) to immerse themselves in the target language.	70%

This table summarizes the key reasons learners use mobile devices for language learning, highlighting the advantages mobile devices offer in terms of flexibility, accessibility, and engagement. The percentage of participants reflects how common each reason is among learners.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study highlight the growing role of mobile devices in supporting advanced learners in their English language acquisition. The use of mobile devices, especially smartphones and tablets, has become integral to the learning process, offering a range of benefits for learners of all levels. The data collected from 20

students reveal that while mobile devices are widely regarded as useful tools for language learning, their use varies across different contexts and learner preferences.

The findings from this study demonstrate that mobile devices are a powerful and widely used tool in language learning. They provide flexibility, accessibility, and a wealth of resources that cater to individual learning preferences and needs. However, their potential is not always fully realized in formal educational settings. There is a need for more intentional and structured integration of mobile devices into classroom activities, ensuring that learners make the most of these tools.

To optimize the use of mobile devices for language learning, teachers should guide students in selecting effective apps and resources, set clear learning goals, and encourage disciplined use in class to minimize distractions. Additionally, learners should be aware of the importance of balancing educational and non-educational uses of their devices, making sure that their language learning goals remain the primary focus.

Implications for Future Research and Practice:

- Future studies could explore the specific impact of various mobile apps on different language skills (e.g., speaking, listening, writing, etc.), as well as their effectiveness in diverse learner groups.
- Further research is also needed to investigate the optimal integration of mobile devices in classroom settings and how teachers can best support learners in using mobile technologies to their full potential.
- Teachers may benefit from professional development focused on incorporating mobile devices into their teaching strategies, ensuring that these tools enhance, rather than detract from, the learning experience.

In conclusion, mobile devices are transforming language learning, offering students new opportunities for autonomous, flexible, and engaging study. However, to maximize their potential, learners and educators must work together to navigate challenges, ensuring that these devices are used effectively as a tool for educational success.

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