

MOBILE APPLICATIONS AND ONLINE PLATFORMS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: A CRITICAL PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract. *In the contemporary digital age, it is vital for people to use mobile applications and online platforms for learning foreign languages. In this regard, modern technology makes learning more accessible, interactive, flexible and motivates students to learn by making it interesting. This study is aimed at analyzing the influence of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and online platforms on the acquisition of language skills. In particular, relying on scholarly literature, the paper explores both advantages and disadvantages of using these approaches to language learning.*

Key words: *Online platforms, MALL, language acquisition, digital education, learner motivation, language skills*

Introduction

Development of digital technologies has greatly influenced education, especially in the area of language learning. While the conventional form of education involving textbooks and classroom interactions is still being applied, the emerging trend involves the use of mobile apps and online learning. The incorporation of these technologies provides learners with opportunities to have access to education at any time from anywhere.

The usage of mobile applications facilitates learner's engagement in learning activities by offering them various kinds of games and quizzes as well as instantaneous feedbacks. In the same way, online platforms help learners to interact, exchange ideas, and acquire resources within a virtual environment. This means that learners are not restricted by physical classroom spaces since they can continue learning autonomously.

Although the utilization of these technologies offers numerous strengths, there are many challenges that accompany them as well. For instance, overdependence on technology can hinder critical thinking among other weaknesses such as distractions and lack of practical interactions. Hence, it becomes necessary to consider MALL and online learning.

Literature review.

Previous studies have identified numerous benefits of using mobile devices in language learning. One of the biggest ones is increased flexibility since learning can be done at any time and in any place, which facilitates continual learning. Another important notion introduced by scholars is micro-learning, which implies studying material in small chunks. This strategy improves learning consistency and helps to memorize information better. Gamification, which means rewarding learners with points and badges, has proven to be a highly motivating strategy.

However, researchers also point out some potential obstacles. The inconsistency of approaches used by various apps can negatively impact the quality of studying. Also, too many multimedia elements can cause cognitive overload, thus affecting learners'

ability to absorb new information. Social interactions are another issue since learning languages requires social interaction and collaboration, which cannot be provided by mobile apps. Face-to-face communication seems to be necessary for developing communicative skills adequately.

Methods.

The current study is grounded on the review of the literature. There was an examination of different academic resources that have been written on mobile learning and online learning in particular. The chosen academic texts have addressed specific themes which include issues concerning motivations, accessibilities, personalized learning, and problems associated with digital learning.

Thematic analysis was conducted in order to discover common themes in the reviewed literature. The identified themes have included motivation, development of language skills, learner autonomy, and digital learning problems.

Results.

From the analyzed literature, some major findings concerning the application of MALL techniques and use of online platforms in language learning become evident. Below, the most important findings from the thematic analysis, such as motivation and engagement, personalization, learner autonomy, and current limitations, are presented.

1. Motivation and Learner Engagement

Among the major findings is the effect that mobile applications and online platforms have on learners' motivation and engagement. Mobile apps boost motivation and engagement through gamification, instantaneous feedback, and progress monitoring. Consequently, users establish regular studying habits.

2. Language Skill Development

The study results suggest that mobile assisted language learning and online learning have significant impacts on developing receptive and productive language skills. They help in vocabulary acquisition, reading and listening skills. Micro-exposure to linguistic information within several minutes of learning helps to increase memory and facilitate vocabulary acquisition. Listening skills benefit from authentic pronunciation and diverse accents available on digital platforms. At the same time, although receptivity shows considerable growth, research indicates that productive skills like speaking and writing may develop more slowly unless the platforms have interactive or communicative components, for instance, voice recognition or communication with peers.

3. Learner Autonomy

One of the most important outcomes indicated in the literature is increased learner autonomy. MALL encourages autonomous learning since users have full control over their learning process and can choose suitable learning materials. Thus, learners become more independent. Additionally, MALL can be difficult for learners with poor self-regulation abilities

4. Personalization and Adaptive Learning

One of the most important findings concerns personalization. The majority of applications adjust the complexity of the material depending on learners' achievements, resulting in moderate difficulty levels. Although it leads to improved learning effectiveness, it can simplify some complex language constructions.

5. Attention Fragmentation and lack of Social interaction

Another significant finding involves the joint effect of mobile-learning environments on students' attentiveness and communication skills. The use of mobile technologies results in a distractive environment for learning because mobile devices offer various notifications, multitasking capabilities, and access to entertainment applications. Hence, learners' attentiveness is diminished and becomes difficult to focus on activities like reading and writing tasks. However, m-learning and the use of online learning platforms cannot replace face-to-face communication entirely. Even though some online learning systems offer a chat feature, there is still room for improvement because of the absence of immediacy, emotional expression, and spontaneous reactions in communication.

Discussion

The outcomes indicate that MALL and web-based applications have a largely positive effect on language acquisition processes, especially concerning learners' motivation, involvement, and independence. The outcomes corroborate the theoretical background by stressing gamification, micro-learning, and mobility as crucial elements for maintaining learners' interest and facilitating consistent practice.

Regarding language abilities, the research suggests that MALL is especially efficient for the acquisition of receptive skills, namely vocabulary, reading, and listening, owing to consistent exposure and multimodal delivery. Nonetheless, productive skills such as speaking and writing seem less advanced, which implies that the majority of applications do not provide enough possibilities for engaging in actual communication.

Moreover, another important finding refers to promoting autonomy among the learners. Mobile devices and online technology give the opportunity to manage their own learning process. Nevertheless, this autonomy is not always completely productive as there might be problems with self-regulation for some students.

There are several significant limitations mentioned. Cognitive load increases while working with technology. Learners might experience lack of critical thinking skills because of overusing automated feedback from mobile applications. Attention is divided because of using mobile devices. Finally, lack of face-to-face communication might affect communicative competencies.

Conclusion.

Mobile-assisted language learning, together with other web-based tools, has proved to be an integral part of contemporary language teaching and learning, because of its advantages, namely increased motivation, more flexibility, and learner independence. At the same time, this type of learning involves problems like mental fatigue, distraction, and insufficient socialization.

The results show that technologies should not fully substitute traditional approaches; however, they may serve as a useful addition in terms of proper planning and implementation. Therefore, the key to the effectiveness of the proposed tool lies in integrating it properly into educational activities.

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