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EFL Tertiary Learners' Perceptions on Ease of Use of Portable Devices in English Mobile Learning at a University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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Abstract

As the remarkable breakthrough of the age of revolution 4.0, mobile learning (M-learning) appears among the sharp development of modern technology. Their clever features have been discovered to have accompanied the exponential growth of mobile devices to enhance students' learning whenever and wherever. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has so been considered to benefit individuals' English proficiency. Students' attitudes on utilizing mobile devices for learning while being connected to a wireless network need to be carried out, even though learning through mobile devices is expected to apply appropriately to teaching and learning. Through a survey of 207 university EFL students using a questionnaire with 13 English-Vietnamese statements within 20 minutes, this article aims to exhibit EFL learners' behaviors and acceptance of the use of mobile devices in English learning at a university in Vietnam. The survey ran within two weeks in the first semester of the 2019–2020 school year at a University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. A quantitative approach was used to gather and analyze data from the questionnaire under SPSS version 20. Research findings demonstrated that learners' opinions regarding adopting portable technology in English learning are favorable. The learner supports this virtual learning thanks to mobile gadgets' smart functions offering convenient learning without demanding users' efforts to manipulate. Neither my current university firmly welcomes mobile learning applications to serve flexible education and training in the future.

Keywords: EFL tertiary students, ease of use of portable devices, mobile learning, MALL, perceptions.

Introduction

Yesteryear's humans use English as a universal language of communication. It has been seen that learning English is vital for all among international integration; however, challenging for busy students who range widely in ages, levels, employment, etc., due to limited time for learning English in class, with tutors, and from books. Therefore, given the fast-paced environment of present society and education systems in Vietnam generally, for EFL students at current universities, Ho Chi Minh City in particular. It is undeniable that EFL students require assistance with their English learning through a versatile and dynamic approach that enables

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them to learn anywhere and anytime because their English fluency cannot be achieved in such a learning situation. Consequently, it is crucial to look for and investigate proactive and useful teaching strategies to aid students in learning English at any place and at any time.

According to Truong and Le (2022), social media, sharply transmitted through portable devices among wireless networks, has become progressively widespread worldwide in the 4.0 era. Indeed, thanks to their "handy and compact" features, the majority of people around the globe now enthusiastically utilize mobile devices such as smartphones, tablets, iPods, MacBooks, laptops, etc. (Iqbal & Bhatti, 2015). In light of mobile gadgets' advancement and functionalities, these currently have tangible datasets that facilitate human beings' interaction, informational needs, and educational requirements in both offline and online settings at all times. Through the Internet, portables can offer a tremendous variety of knowledge coupled with educational opportunities for all levels of students (Thao, 2014). In reality, it is anticipated that educational institutions in Vietnam will operate a mobile learning system using the earnings from mobile devices for student learning. Furthermore, virtual learning was conformably integrated into learning via videoconferencing software during COVID-19, like Google Meet, Zoom, Zalo, Moodle, etc. (Hiroyuki, 2021). In spite of mobile learning's tremendous strength, however, learners must participate in using portable gadgets in their English learning, and it is important to look into how they have been trained psychologically to use them. The aim of this study is to ascertain EFL learners' attitudes about flipped learning and to suggest some additional areas for upcoming investigations upon the integration of mobile applications in instruction. The prior goal of this study is to tackle the ensuing study issue "What are learners' attitudes towards ease of using mobile devices in their English learning?" In continuous items, the theory and technique of mobile learning are discussed and evaluated.

Literature Review

Mobile Learning (M-learning) Review

M-learning, which has advanced fast that it has exceeded expectations for information and communication technology (ICT) experts. The description of "M-learning" varied depending on the point of the author's perspective. Quinn (2000) defines learning via mobile equipment as the process of learning while using a portable computer like a Palm, a Windows CE device, or even a person's digital cell phone. Mobile education is a term used to describe the usage of mobile technologies, much like Sharples (2006), who makes the same assertion. Additionally, the definition that follows demonstrates the viability of mobile education in a culture where technology is pervasive, like whatever learning takes place when a student is not in an allocated, preset location or when they utilize the learning opportunities provided by portable technology (O'Malley et al. 2003: 6; Feser, 2010). A mobile learning application's valuable definitions and information regarding M-learning were addressed in many forward pieces of research that were summarized in a model below.

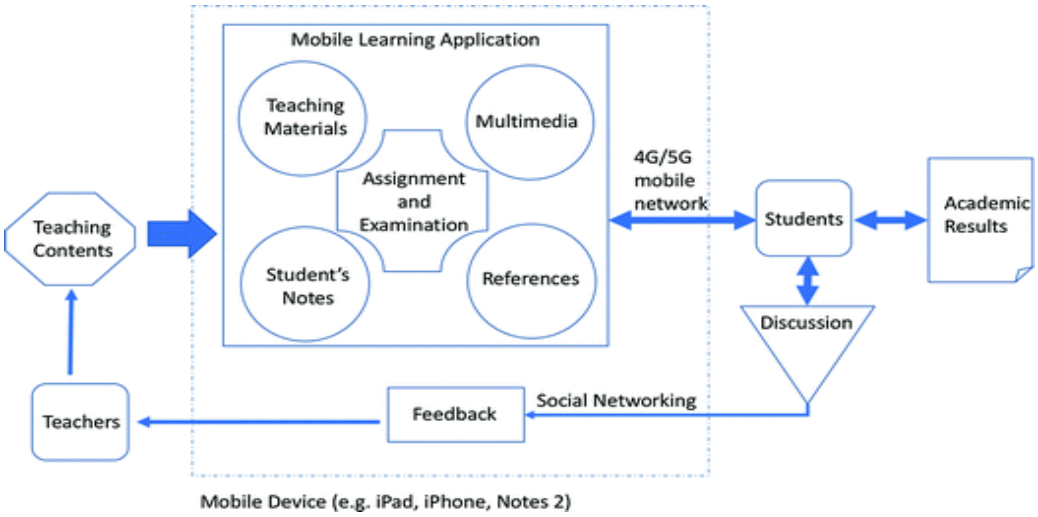

Figure 1. A Mobile Learning Application Model (Zhong et al., 2018)

Several details must be finished in order to construct the ideal application for learning online through handy devices. This article aims to examine how EFL student users behave when it comes to mobile learning and how their willingness to learn English using mobile devices may serve as a useful starting point for future research on mobile learning applications. As the subject of the current study, numerous earlier investigations conducted by authors from Vietnam and throughout the globe, including Vo et al. (2017), Aish and Love (2013), Pollara (2011), Khanh and Gim (2014), and Kuciapski (2016) have been used. Subsequently, disregarding the views of EFL learners on the mobile learning approach, these investigations focus on the perceptions, behaviors, and acceptability of majors belonging to English in higher education. As a result, this poll was conducted to fill this gap, update statistics on how EFL students view English M-learning and offer a unique reference for relevant future research. In the following sections, various ideas were explained to discuss how mobile learning and students' English language acquisition are associated.

Research Question

The survey was designed to provide information on the following research topic in order to answer the research question:

How do tertiary EFL students appreciate the ease of using handheld devices for their English learning?

Mobile Learning for English Learning

Digital technology has become a common aspect of human existence in the era of revolution 4.0, overcoming restrictions on time and space through a variety of features; in particular, it is a priceless and fantastic advancement in education across the globe. In scaffold learning, Chen et al. (2002) claim that mobile technologies have unique qualities and benefits that conventional distant learning methods cannot reach. The following benefits of mobile learning can help students learn English to a significant degree. Apparently, mobile devices turn into multimedia accessing tools of capture, representation, connectivity, and analysis that offer beneficial qualities for both instruction and understanding (Pollara, 2011). These benefits include

supporting learners' motivation, encouraging their sense of responsibility, increasing their dedication and boosting their education generally, and studying English specifically, and resilience to learn English via digital environment. In addition, he emphasizes that mobile technology is able to aid learners in developing a person's capacity to organize and self-control learning activities. Furthermore, portable devices can help students improve their critical thinking abilities and provide active and experiential learning possibilities in English learning, permit students to rapid note-taking via images, sounds, and video recording, support communication, collaboration, and knowledge-building via real-time data in online classes. Further, contextualized, constructivist, and independent learning are supported in the teaching and learning environment by mobile technology. Thus, Naismith et al. (2004) find countless others of high value for learning English in particular and in high education generally. According to Pollara (2011), mobile devices also provide a number of difficulties for both teaching and learning English, including mobility challenges established teaching methods; informality was able to make M-learning mislay its advantages if employed excessively; controlling ownership poses difficulties for institutions. Likewise, the portability and mobility of mobile devices are unmatched. However, stretched eye contact with a mobile device's screen could harm the users' vision. When using mobile devices for learning, users must employ prudence and balance to make it suitable and useful.

Mobile gadgets offer a dynamic atmosphere that fosters teaching English anywhere, at any time. Basing the connection between teaching English and mobile learning along with the usefulness and problems of learning English on mobile teaching, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Venkatesh & Davis, 1996), which was used to develop the questionnaire's content and outlined research theory in the section below.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

To gauge how easily and how usefully technology is viewed by those who use it, Venkatesh and Davis (1996) investigate the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). In line with Napitupulu et al. (2017), the current study inherits the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) of Venkatesh and Davis (1996) by determining the elements from the factor Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) influencing users' thought about ese of using portable technology. Additionally, TAM is a comprehensive theory that Raaij and Schepers (2008) believe is one of the models used to explain why individuals adopt digital technology in the scientific literature on information systems. The researcher will use this theoretical framework to analyze how EFL students feel about the ease of using mobile devices to serve their English learning in light of the data and arguments supporting user behavior, cognition, and opinions. The TAM was utilized in Figure 2 below.

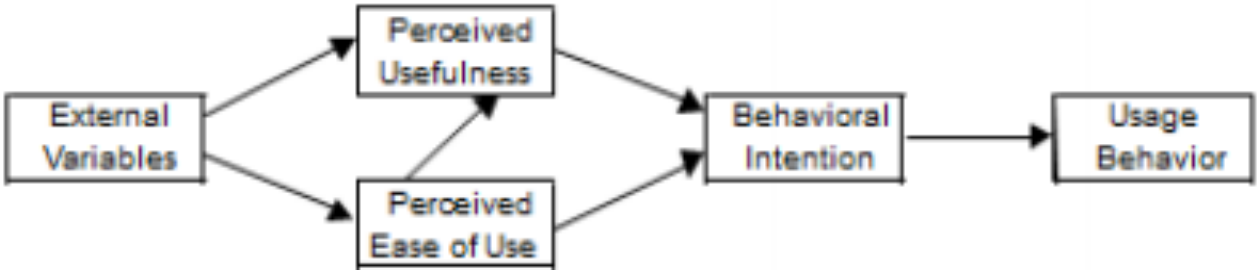

Figure 2. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Venkatesh & Davis, 1996)

Methodology

Participants

The survey was carried out within two weeks of the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year at a University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, on 207 EFL tertiary students as seen as research participants.

Research Design

In order to assess EFL students' behaviors on learning English via portable devices and their attitudes towards ease of using mobile technology in their English learning, The questionnaire was developed as the study's instrument with thirteen correlatively organized English-Vietnamese statements. The participants were required to complete the questionnaire within 20 minutes. Row data from the questionnaire would be collected and analyzed via SPSS 20 to reveal two key values of Mean and Standard Deviation that are seen as the foundation to interpret the research findings.

Data Collection

The quantitative approach used to collect data from the survey with thirteen questions within 15 minutes to appraise EFL students' attitudes towards mobile learning is seen as the cluster gathering 12 statements describing EFL students' attitudes towards using mobile devices in learning English. Each statement was backed by five Likert scales on which the participants were asked to select their opinions by choosing one cell only in the notion columns for strongly agree (SA), agree (A), no idea (NI), strongly disagree (SD), and disagree (D). For the quantitative data analysis of the survey using statistics for reliability, frequency, percentages, and mean score of each statement, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used. The questionnaire's Cronbach Alpha value falling 0.71 before the survey leading to the study process following:

Step 1: Develop a survey framework,

Step 2: Designing questionnaire,

Step 3: Delivering questionnaire,

Step 4: Collecting the completed questionnaire,

Step 5: Analyzing data.

Results/findings

Research Results

The questionnaire outputs were presented as numbers on a sticking scale for each statement that was collected quantitatively. The report provided a response to the research problem, "What are students' attitudes towards efforts of using mobile devices to support their learning English?" Proportions of the participants' ideas for each statement showed that student users appraised their supportive behavior and revealed their acceptance of using mobile devices in English learning.

Table 1. EFL students' answers to the questionnaire

No.	Statement (N=207, Mean= 3.69)	Minimum	Maximum	Mean *3.69*	Std. Deviation
1	It is relatively simple to learn how to use portable devices for English learning.	1.00	5.00	**3.54**	1.03
2	On a mobile device with attached features, learning English is not overly tough.	1.00	5.00	**3.77**	0.86
3	Using a mobile application or a website designed for mobile devices is simple to participate in group work discussions.	1.00	5.00	**3.83**	0.85
4	Mobile devices make it simple to take part in classroom activities whenever and wherever.	1.00	5.00	**3.96**	0.77
5	Mobile devices make it simple to complete all tasks for English courses.	1.00	5.00	**3.86**	0.81
6	Mobile devices are simple to manipulate in English classes.	1.00	5.00	**3.92**	0.79
7	I can access the materials for the English courses using a mobile device.	1.00	5.00	**3.88**	0.78
8	I feel comfortable utilizing a mobile device to practice the fundamental English knowledge and abilities.	1.00	5.00	**3.91**	0.80
9	I would want to learn further about mobile applications so that I may participate in the sessions even more.	1.00	5.00	**3.98**	0.82
10	Utilizing mobile devices to learn English costs money.	1.00	5.00	**2.51**	1.27
11	Using the internet on a mobile device is expensive.	1.00	5.00	**2.62**	1.23
12	The cost of using online resources for learning English is high.	1.00	5.00	**2.44**	1.24
13	I find it challenging to master my English classes using mobile devices.	1.00	5.00	**2.42**	1.18

The table presented the thoughts of EFL students on how simple to learn English by using mobile devices. Overall, learner users do not reflect their efforts or difficulties in manipulating mobile devices for their learning with mean M=3.69 more than value 3 and closer to value 4 (agree), which interprets that users tend to appreciate the ease of using mobile technology in English learning. As can be observed, the student users recognized how simple it was to use mobile devices over a wireless network (M=3.54, 3.77). The participants said they had no

trouble utilizing smart mobile devices to learn English (M=3.92), participate in discussions (M=3.83), access learning materials (M=3.96), complete activities (M=3.86), and scrutinize their English courses (M=3.88). As a consequence, practicing their English knowledge and skills was not challenging for EFL students (M=3.91). Additionally, it was expected that students would integrate the several sophisticated programs for learning English. However, a few students' insensitivity was noted at mean scores of 2.51, 2.62, 2.44, and 2.42, which are much lower than 3 and show that most participants did not believe that the price of a mobile device is too expensive. The results demonstrate that there was minimal variation in the degrees of agreement among the students' answers, with SD values ranging from 0.79 to 1.27. The usage of mobile devices by learners in their English learning was generally acknowledged. The vast majority of students disagreed that having mobile devices, Wi-Fi, and online documents cost a lot of money based on the convergence of scales 1 and 2 they selected for statements 10, 11, 12, and 13.

EFL students are able to adopt mobile devices to learn English as stimulating, according to the PEOU of TAM. In learner users' perceptions, displaying learning activities, such as accessing educational resources, connecting with teachers and students, and fostering teacher autonomy in learning, could be more complex. Their attitudes towards adopting mobile gadgets in learning English are favorable. In essence, the participants believe using mobile devices to study English is an efficient strategy, as shown by the scale ratio from statement 6 to statement 10. From the sixth to the last point, it was said that EFL students agreed that mobile devices could help them learn English more conveniently. They acknowledge and concur that using mobile technology can help students improve their English skills and knowledge of grammar, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Discussions

Research Results Interpret

The EFL students almost invariably behave well when teaching English via mobile gadgets. Additionally, learners thought that using mobile devices can help them to learn English successfully thanks to smart virtual functions. Participants are optimistic about learning English via mobile devices. The questionnaire's results revealed a favorable response to the research topic "What are EFL students' attitudes towards ease of use of mobile devices to learn English?" An in-depth scale analysis revealed that nearly all students behave well when learning English on mobile devices. For each item pertained to practice and attitude toward learning English through mobile devices, approximately 78% of respondents chose the "agree" option. The data examination showed that EFL students intend to use technology (IU) in their English learning. Indeed, EFL students agree to adopt mobile devices in English learning with their favorable sentiments regarding this teaching and learning technique because using mobile technology for English learning has not challenged them.

Comparing with Previous Studies

In the current study, quantitative data from a questionnaire treated by SPSS showed that the majority of EFL users are confident in manipulating handy gadgets for their English instruction,

which is interpreted by the mean value of 3.69. Meanwhile, prior research by Vo et al. (2017), Abu-Al-Aish and Love (2013), Pollara (2011), Ngo and Gwangyong (2014), and Kuciapski (2016) found out the lower questionnaire results (63%) of students' supportive perceptions regarding the use of handheld gadgets in English learning and teaching particularly. It is indicated such a difference marks inherited study's new findings involving survey method and outcomes, which was thought that mobile learning might inspire learners to acquire English and assist them in performing their learning anywhere and at any time.

Conclusion

In summary, EFL students at the current university acknowledged that using mobile devices to learn English does not require them to exert much effort. Mobile technology is acceptable to and well-received by EFL learner users. M-learning applications were not focused on implementing yet in current research, which is one of its limitations. However, future studies are anticipated to use them for training and acquiring English at the current universities in particular, as well as in education across Vietnam and the rest of the world generally. Additionally, the researchers would recommend funding and regulations for M-learning programs; planning and testing mobile learning should be done for learners to lead to the considerable convenience of studying at a university and in other locations

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Biodata

Vo Thuy Linh works as an English teacher at Sai Gon University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She is currently a Ph.D. of TESOL with research interests are teaching English pronunciation and using technologies in teaching languages, especially mobile learning which was investigated in her Ph.D. thesis.