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Toys to Tools: A Glimpse into Mobile Phones in the EFL Classroom – A Case Study

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Abstract

Mobile technologies, particularly cell phones and smartphones, are presented as an appealing opportunity to progress in the teaching-learning process, contributing to remarkable success while minimizing learning difficulties. This paper was based on the findings of a laborious research project including 71 students from three classes at the College of Foreign Economic Relations (COFER) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. A comprehensive survey, a face-to-face interview, and careful observation with a student focus group were used to conduct the extensive investigation. The findings revealed a generally positive attitude toward this technology, which meets the needs and preferences of the students. The study has three distinct goals: (1) to thoroughly investigate some of the new challenges and deep joys associated with cell phones in EFL classrooms; (2) to fully consider both the practical and more fundamental philosophical issues at hand. Finally, a thorough discussion (3) provides a plausible explanation for the unexpected results as well as broad directions for future research.

Keywords: *mobile phones, digital immigrants, challenges, pleasures, philosophical issues*

Introduction

The mobile landscape

According to the UNESCO 2013 Report, mobile technology is present even in areas with limited access to schools, books, and computers. With their falling prices, mobile phones are becoming the preferred mode of communication for most of the population, who understand how to use mobile devices even in economically depressed areas (UNESCO, 2013). Annual mobile phone subscriptions surpassed fixed-line subscriptions worldwide in 2002. In 2013, the number of mobile devices connected to the Internet outnumbered desktop computers and laptops. At the beginning of 2013, it is estimated that mobile phones had reached 96 percent of the global market and 128 percent in developed countries. In developing countries, mobile device penetration is currently estimated to be 89% (ITU, 2013).

In many countries, adults own more than one mobile device per person (Statista, 2016). The Economist refers to this phenomenon as "the new nomadism" (Woodill, 2011: Kindle location 127). More than 100 countries have more mobile phone users than their population. Globally, approximately 7.5 million mobile phones and tablets are in use. According to survey results, 25% of mobile phone users expect to own a second mobile device in 2016. (Cisco, 2012). These trends, however, are changing and shifting dramatically: China surpassed the United States in terms of active smartphones and tablets in February 2013 but ranked only sixth in terms of

growth, trailing Colombia, Vietnam, Turkey, Ukraine, and Egypt. Almost all teenagers (93.6% of those aged 13 to 15 and 99.0% aged 16 to 18) owned cell phones. Adults on average, check their devices every six minutes (Farago, 2013).

Globally, there are approximately 4 billion mobile phone users. 1.08 billion people use smartphones on a regular basis, while regular phones are used by 3.05 billion people (listening, calling and texting). Up to 950 million of these people use non-SMS phone types sparingly. While watching television, 86 percent of mobile phone users access the Internet directly. According to statistics (https://frankwbaker.com/mlc/media-use-stosystem/), 61 percent of mobile phone users play games, 55 percent use weather apps, 50 percent use general search and mapping, 49 percent use social media frequently, 42 percent listen to music, 36 percent read the news, and 33 percent watch movies... Every day, mobile devices generate over 200 million video views. It is now estimated that 1.5 billion mobile phones exist (Prensky, 2004). According to Gartner, Canalys, and other market research (cited by Van Grinsven, 2004), global smartphone sales will reach 170 million units within four to five years, up from just over 20 million units this year. "*There's an app for that*," as the app revolution has swept the world, has quickly become a tech buzzword/mouthpiece (Charles and Aaron, 2014). Furthermore, learner-centered teaching of out-of-the-box learning fundamentally transforms students from passive learners who only achieve superficial learning to deep learners who gain a profound understanding of the concept (James, 2017).

Smartphones penetration in Vietnam

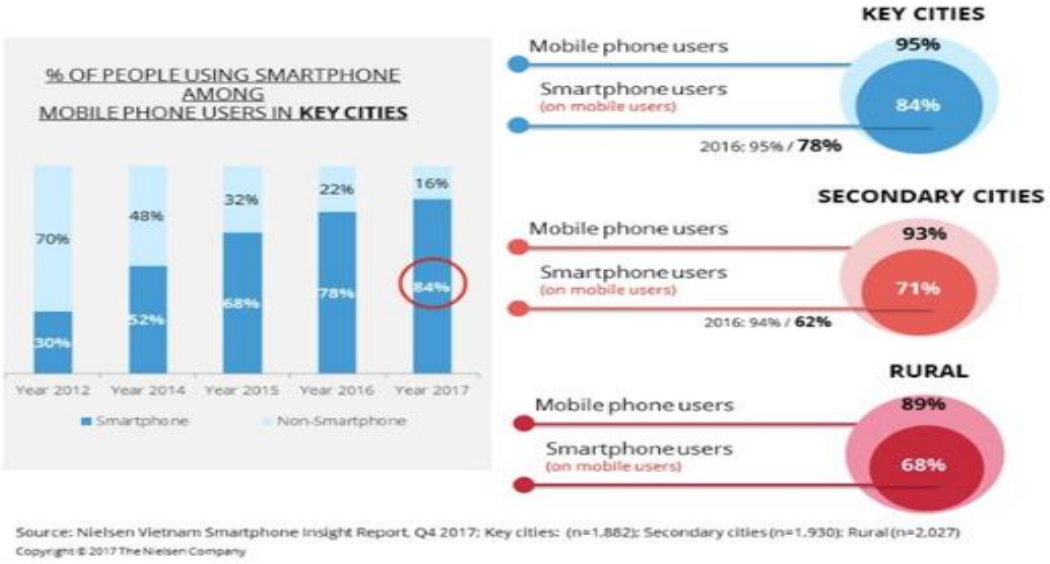


Figure 1. Percentage of smartphone users in Vietnam from 2015 to 2022 (in millions)*

This statistic, beyond doubt, proves the random number of smartphone users in Vietnam between 2015 and 2022. The number of smartphone users in Vietnam was estimated to be 28.77 million in 2017. This means that less than a third of the current population uses a smartphone, and this figure is expected to rise to two-fifths (40 percent) by 2021. According to a recent systematic meeting survey, more than seven in ten (71%) smartphone users in Vietnam use their phones primarily for taking photos or filming, while 70% listen to music intently and nearly half (54%) watch the news frequently.

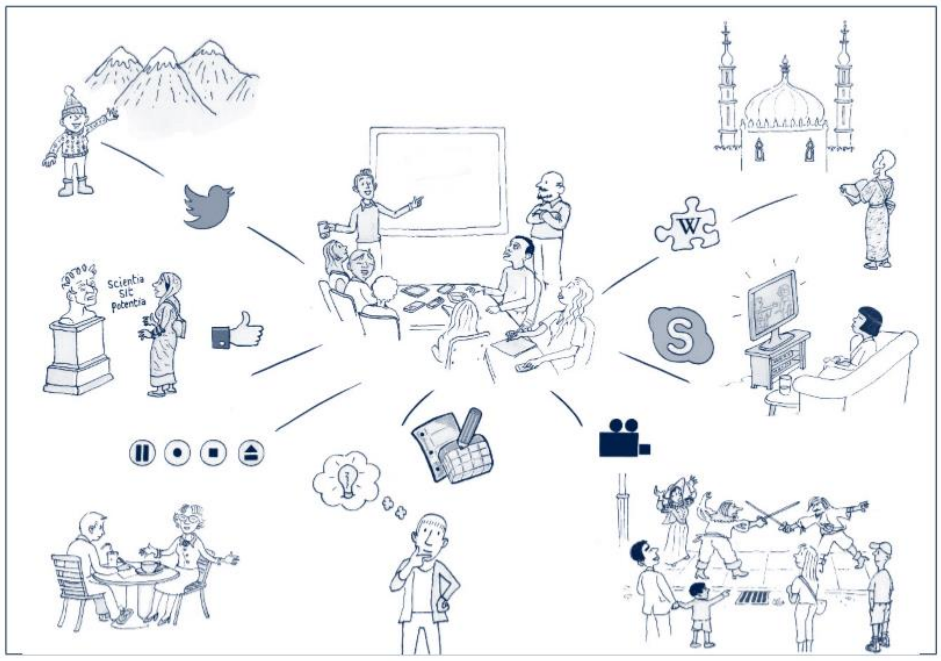


Figure 2. An example of mobile pedagogy (original artwork by Martyn Ford) (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2007)

To use or not to use: Mobile phones at the tertiary level?

Mobile learning (M-learning), according to educators, is the field that studies how mobile devices can significantly contribute to learning (Batista, 2011). M-learning frequently involves the use of mobile technologies, either alone or in conjunction with other information and communication technologies, to enable connected learning at any time and from any location (UNESCO, 2013). According to Hawkins, inventor of the Palm Pilot: "*One day, two or three billion people will have cell phones, and not all of them will have PCs… At that point, cell phones will become their digital life*" (Stone, 2004). As a result, the continued presence and significant relevance of such devices in everyday life have influenced educational research (Pachler et al., 2010). While there is little current literature on cell phone use in the classroom, some pioneering research has shed some light on the subject. This is thought to be a broad, fast-moving and contentious hot topic. However, the impact of handheld devices on the foreign language teaching and learning process cannot be overstated, as they help to diversify activities by improving applications to accommodate different learning styles. As a result, mobile phones have limitless potential to make learning more public, collaborative, and relevant (UNESCO, 2012).

Literature review

Mobile phones in formal education: Strengths and Weaknesses

Several landmark studies have found that using mobile phones for language learning is beneficial. The undeniable maximum benefit of using mobile devices in education is the overwhelming advantage of creating sheer enjoyment and unrestricted access to electronic resources. Thornton and Houser (2005) correctly conducted an intriguing study of three language studies on mobile learning to pinpoint the effect. Their intended audience consists of Japanese university students. The research was primarily carried out by exchanging emails on mobile phones in order to collect vocabulary lessons on mobile phones and then by using video-enabled mobile phones to improve English-speaking skills. Over the course of two weeks, five

individual lessons were delivered three times per day. In the control study group, language learners who received emails or text messages over the phone performed better on the tests than the paper-based group. Hence, students thought that using cell phones while learning was "a valuable teaching method" (p.217).

Ally et al. (2007) critically reviewed a number of studies on the optimal integration of mobile phones into foreign language teaching and learning activities and made on-the-spot observations demonstrating that mobile phone use promotes optimal learning performance. Chen et al. (2008) conducted a linguistic study on the additional benefits of mobile phones as a major lexical contributor for English learners in Taiwan. Their research concluded that students are deeply concerned about cell phone use due to their unlimited access to material and extraordinary ability to practice regularly anytime and anywhere.

This is consistent with the findings of Kukulska-Hulme (2009), who investigated the numerous benefits of mobile phones in mission-based learning, specifically how to integrate what is taught in the classroom with learning outside the classroom. Accepting a mobile phone in the classroom encourages students to have an instant intimate connection to their learning since they are especially effective in fostering collaborative learning in small groups. Students, for example, can visit various educational websites that combine learning with fully interactive games, as well as websites that promote interactivity. Kukulska-Hulme (2009) also suggested using the phone's SMS feature to expand learners' vocabulary significantly.

In the same view, this fits with the findings by Wills (2010), who highlighted the extra convenience of a phone that provides students with 24/7 access to study materials, sends systematic observations to teachers, and carefully manages extracurricular activities. Stockwell (2010, 2012) and Ballance (2012) compared the value that PC and power cell phones immediately serve as lucrative sources for invoiced CALL tasks in a zealous and extensive discussion. Bibby (2011) thoroughly investigated user preferences in language learning between PCs and mobile phones. Mobile phones appear to outperform stationary desktops for mid-length workouts. Darmi et al. (2013) conducted another meticulous study in which they discovered the profound impact of cell phone use on the broader vocabulary of EFL learners. The study almost concluded that intermediate EFL learners who used mobile devices improved their vocabulary proficiency. The study also assumed that gender had no effect on students' vocabulary retention.

Mobile phone use has been shown in studies to have a positive and significant impact on education in general and foreign language learning in particular. Dang (2013) conducted a scientific study on Vietnamese learners' attitudes and experiences with mobile phones when enthusiastically supporting English learning. This study's findings revealed that most students use mobile phones to learn English, and they anticipate the proliferation of these mobile devices in the future. The study also aims to change negative attitudes toward phone use in schools. Albion (2014), in the same vein, conducted a broader review than previous studies on cell phone use in the real-world context of language learning. They reported that learners enthusiastically welcomed the seamless integration of mobile phones into second-language teaching and that it made a significant contribution to improving language skills and related language areas.

Similarly, Kanchana and Saha (2015) investigated how smartphones can be integrated into learning to assist ESL students in India. They came to the conclusion that incorporating cell phones into the teaching process was a wise decision. With their easy internet access and readily available learning apps, mobile phones broaden the scope of teachers' interactions and provide unparalleled experiences by stimulating learners' curiosity and autonomy. Teachers, on the other hand, must redesign their teaching and learning methods to be more effective. According

to Pearson's (2015) study, another potential factor is that students believe they know more about using mobile devices for studying than teachers do. At Aljouf University in Saudi Arabia, Nalliveettil and Alenazi (2016) investigated students' perspectives on using mobile phones for English study. The survey method was used to collect data from a sample of 52 English undergraduate students, and the positive results demonstrated that the students achieved good academic results as a result of study support via mobile phones.

Salameh (2017) conducted a language study on hiring Saudi students to acquire current knowledge and skills via the Facebook website. His study participants were positive and enthusiastic about the use of Facebook to acquire knowledge (Salameh, 2017). He discovered that Facebook's potential for student education was truly limitless. It is possible to improve learners' knowledge and master students' skills using vast secondary resources to help learners achieve the highest academic achievement.

Due to a lack of evidence, this remains a contentious topic. Several studies' cross-sectional analyses show that mobile phones are a high-risk factor for foreign language teachers. Furthermore, according to some studies, students use cell phones when they do not want to participate in face-to-face classroom interaction or when they are bored with teachers and their lessons (Narendran et al., 2017; Olufadi, 2015). Like this widely held belief, mobile phones have numerous serious technological limitations (Batista, 2011). However, it must be admitted that, even with smartphones, selecting the right applications requires some technical knowledge because many applications only run on specific operating systems (Batista, 2011). Machado (2012) countered that it is necessary to impose strict restrictions on mobile phones in order to "slow down" students from the hustle and bustle of daily life. According to Weimer (2015), students described themselves as "addicted" to their phones and unable to "unplug," which fueled a real fear of the negative consequences of constantly texting and posting.

Furthermore, unrestricted access to profitable information sources such as Email, the Internet, and games can be both engaging and distracting (Patient and Bere, 2013; Rahman et al., 2013; Tossell et al., 2015). According to reports from users who are frequently confronted with derogatory remarks being truncated online (Common Sense Media, 2012), their use in the classroom can pose a risk that causes unwanted distractions for students. According to studies, students who texted in class frequently took poorer notes, retained less information, and performed poorly on tests (Kuznekoff and Titsworth, 2013). People who multitask on a laptop, such as taking notes, texting, and surfing Facebook, performed worse on tests than those who did not use their phones (Sana et al., 2013). It has also been vigorously argued that students who did not use smartphones in the class wrote 62 percent more updates on short notes and scored more than half as well on a multiple-choice test (Kuznekoff and Titsworth, 2013). Mobile phone use in education is thus a complex contemporary topic that highlights both interesting aspects and minor drawbacks that must be taken seriously. In the Vietnamese context, studies on the use of mobile phones as a multipurpose tool for both EFL teachers and students are lacking in key contemporary literature.

Research questions

The article demonstrates the viability of mobile phone presence in the Vietnamese EFL classroom. As a result, the topic of this article is whether there is agreement among Vietnamese students on how to view mobile phones as an effective learning tool. The primary goal of this study is to gather student opinions on the benefits of using mobile phones in foreign language classes. To accomplish this, the study sought to identify:

1. How often do students use cell phones for academic and non-academic activities?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of using cell phones in the classroom?

3. How do students feel about using cellphones for schoolwork?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

A total of 71 students were invited to participate in the study. Among them, 62 were studying Bachelor of Financial Accounting, 8 were Foreign Languages , and one was studying Bachelor of International Trade at a college in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (Table 1). Most of the respondents were seniors (98.59%). A minority were college sophomores (1.41%).

Table 1. Breakdown of survey respondents by course

Financial Accounting	62
Foreign Languages	8
International Trade	1
Total	71

The present study involved the participation of 71 undergraduate students enrolled in the General English 2 course at the College of Foreign Economic Relations in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. During the three-credit course, 71 freshmen from non-English majors took part in the research. This group of students is studying at a university in Ho Chi Minh City. Their levels of English are varied, but they are mostly pre-intermediate. The recruitment of participants at the College of Foreign Economic Relations was conducted through email outreach to participants in restricted chat groups, advertising to participants in seminar presentations, and direct referrals from course instructors to their students. Interested participants can contact the researcher by Email.

Design of the Study

A 15-question survey, originally designed to reflect valuable ideas from the literature, was displayed as a 15-question SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis survey to collect data on student cell phone use in EFL classes. A total of ten full-time and senior business students were invited to take part in an outstanding pilot survey. The survey questions have been rewritten based on the feedback to make the objective clearer. The thoroughly revised questionnaire was then distributed to the students via a hyperlink in an explanation email. The frequency with which students used their cell phones to take notes, browse classroom materials, message friends, post on Facebook, and organize their social lives was tracked. Respondents provided responses to related questions, such as how much they consented to use mobile phones during school hours. The same was done with the questions about the Negatives, Opportunities, and Threats. Finally, they were asked to suggest other advantages, disadvantages, opportunities, or risks of cell phone use in the classroom and provide personal comments on anything else they wanted to add about the subject. Once completed by students at the author's university, the questionnaire will be processed using the free Stata software. The survey results are based on information provided by 71 students. Following that, the pilot's ten students will form a cohesive group to discuss the results and determine what was deemed acceptable and not mentioned concerning cell phone use in the classroom. The respondents were anonymous, and they were given pseudonyms.

Data collection & analysis

In order to collect students' opinions on the use of mobile phones in foreign language classes, a small-scale descriptive study was carried out. The Stata software automatically calculated answers to the questions. Besides, 71 student respondents submitted freely constructive text comments, which the author then systematically sorted according to keyword-based topics. Along with that, a survey questionnaire was designed to collect data. The questionnaire addressed issues such as i) proprietary or non-exclusive ownership of mobile phones; ii) years of experience with mobile phones in educational institutions; iii) appropriate training for the educational use of mobile phones; iv) attention-distracting cell phone application in EFL; v) constructive suggestions for the use of smartphones in education.

This paper examines students' interests in using their own smartphones to support their learning. The research was conducted through a combination of online surveys, observation, and interviews with ten undergraduate students. Data was collected in the first stage using an online survey, which was then disseminated via Email, social media, and groups devoted to mobile technology. The first section of the assessment incorporated a series of demographic inquiries to obtain information regarding the subjects' ages, gender, educational attainment, and employment history. In the second section, the efficacy of mobile phone use was evaluated using queries on a Likert scale. To determine the validity of the study, an initial online survey was created and distributed to the COFER students via a chat group on the social networking site Zalo. After establishing the validity of the research, an extensive questionnaire was created and sent to the main target group of university undergraduate students. The questionnaire's first section sought to collect demographic information regarding respondents' gender, age, current level of education, and smartphone ownership. The survey examined the respondents' smartphone usage patterns in relation to their responses to the following question. The five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate cell phones' effectiveness as a learning tool. Using the aviation lexicon, an interview tool was used to gather information about participants' encounters. Ten student interviews were conducted to supplement the quantitative survey data and develop the findings using an open-ended, qualitative method. An observation tool was developed to guide the observation process and analyze the data to identify patterns and trends. Researchers should consider how their findings relate to existing literature and their implications for future research or practice.

Results and discussion

Findings of the Verbal Data

Profile of participants

The main participants in this study were college students. The researcher undertook the questionnaire survey in order to thoroughly examine the students' overriding impressions of the students regarding the use of mobile phones for real-world learning. The following tables show the student demographics. The researcher built up detailed information about students by gender, age and level.

Table 2. Students' information by gender

Gender	**Total**	**Percentage**
Male	5	7.25%
Female	64	92.75%
Did not answer	2	
Grand total	**69**	**100.00%**

Table 2 provides information about the gender distribution of a group of 69 students. Five students are male, accounting for 7.25% of the group, while 64 are female, making up the majority at 92.75%. Two students omitted gender information. The total number of participants in the group, which is 69, is represented by the grand total. The table provides an overview of the gender distribution within the group and highlights the significant majority of female students in this context.

Table 3. Students' information by age

Age	**Total**	**Percentage**
19	5	7.04%
20	62	87.32%
21	4	5.63%
Grand total	**71**	**100.00%**

Table 3 provides information regarding the age distribution of a group of 71 students. The table provides demographic information for three age groups, 19-20, and 21-year-old, as well as the number of students in each group. The total number of students consists of 5 students aged 19 years or younger, representing 7.04% of the group. The majority of the group consists of 62 students aged 20 years or younger, representing 87.32%. The remaining group consists of 4 students aged 21 years or younger, representing 5.63% of the group. The total number of students in the group is 71. The table provides an overview of the group's age distribution and identifies a significant proportion of students who are 20 years of age or older within this particular context.

Table 4. Students' information by level

Level	**Total**	**Percentage**
Year 1	0	0%
Year 2	1	1.41%
Year 3	70	98.59%
Grand total	**71**	**100.00%**

Table 4 provides information regarding the composition of a group based on their academic level. The table shows three levels, Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3, and provides the number of students per level. Although no students are in Year 1, only one student is in Year 2, which represents 1.41% of the group. The majority of students, 70 in total, are in Year 3, accounting for 98.59% of the group. The total number of participants in the group is expressed as a percentage. The table provides an overview of the student population's educational attainment and demonstrates that the majority of students are in their third year of study in this particular context.

Table 5. Cellphone ownership

Do you have a smartphone?	**Freq.**	**Percent**	**Cum.**
No	4	5.63	5.63
Yes	67	94.37	100.00
Total	**71**	100.00	

Table 5 presents information about smartphone ownership in a group of 71 individuals. The table presents two possible responses to the question *'Do you own a smartphone?*': ' No' and 'Yes.' The table provides an overview of smartphone ownership within the group, and highlights that most individuals own a smartphone. The table indicates that 4 out of the group's total population do not possess a smartphone, representing 5.63% of the total population. It was precisely observed that the majority of individuals, 67 in total, possess a smartphone, representing 94.37% of the group. The cumulative percentage column indicates the total number of individuals who responded to the question, and in this case, it indicates that all individuals in the group responded to the question. Each row represents the total number of individuals within the group, which is 71.

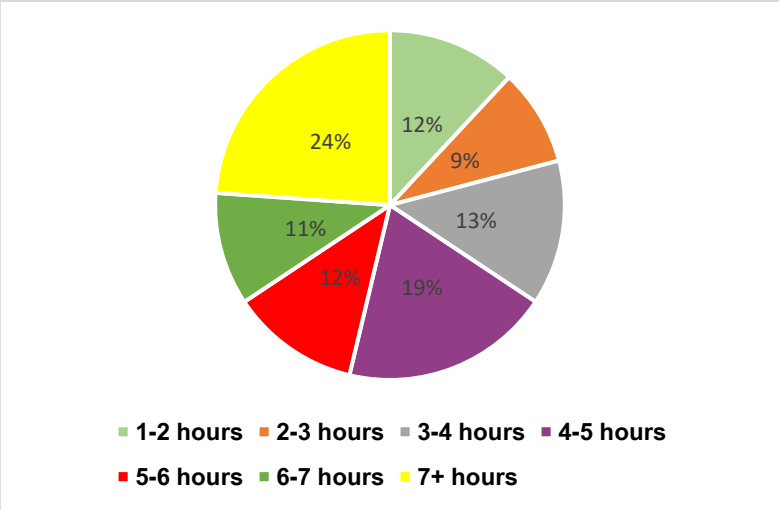


Figure 3. Number of times students report checking their phones on a given day

The findings indicate that many students use extensive smartphones throughout the day. As shown in this Figure 3, it is apparent from the data that the highest percentage of reported phone checks falls within the 7+ hours category, accounting for 23.88% of the total. The second-highest percentage, 19.40%, is found within the 4-5 hour range, suggesting that students engage with their phones for a shorter but still significant duration. A percentage of 13.43% follows closely in the 3-4 hour range, indicating a moderately high level of phone usage during that time period. Both the 1-2 and 5-6 hour ranges exhibit an equal percentage of 11.94%, suggesting that these durations account for a relatively consistent proportion of reported phone checks among students. The 6-7 hour range demonstrates a percentage of 10.45%, indicating a slightly lower level of phone usage compared to the previous time intervals.

Table 6. Perceptions of college students about using mobile phones for education/learning

Statements	**yes**	**no**
A. Look up course schedule	69	1
A. Look up announcements	66	3
B. Email faculty/classmates	61	10
C. Read lecture notes	58	13
D. View lecture recording	12	57
E. Watch educational film	58	13
F. Do library/literature searches	28	39
G. Surf the web for research materials	69	1
H. Share notes with classmates	69	2
I. Take photos of my work	53	18
J. Make videos of my work	10	61

Table 6 reveals college students' perceptions about using mobile phones for educational purposes. The table contains ten statements (A-J) describing different educational/learning activities and indicates the percentage of respondents who responded with a yes or no answer. The table indicates that the majority of students responded positively to statements A, B, G, and H, with 69 students answering 'Yes' and only a few responding 'No.'" For statement C, 61 students overwhelmingly answered 'yes,' while ten respondents overwhelmingly answered 'no.'" For statement E, 58 students responded affirmatively, and 13 responded negatively." The majority of responses to statements D, F, and J were negative, with a higher proportion of students responding with a 'No' than a 'Yes.' Statement D, which relates to viewing lecture recordings, received 12 affirmative responses and 57 negative ones. Statement F, which focuses on conducting library/literature searches, received 28 yes and 39 no responses. Lastly, statement J, which is about making videos of their work, received 10 "Yes" responses and 61 "No" responses. According to Seabra (2013), mobile phones have a camera-like function that allows users to take and post pictures. They also have tremendous resources for recording video and audio, navigation, and GPS sensors.

Table 7. How often do respondents use mobile devices for the following in a typical college class?

	Very often	Often	Not very often	Never	Total
Note-taking	14.08%	33.80%	39.44%	12.68%	100%
Searching for lesson materials	49.30%	40.85%	8.45%	1.41%	100%
Texting friends	14.08%	29.58%	45.07%	9.86%	99%
Facebook posts	5.63%	11.27%	25.35%	57.75%	100%
Organizing your social life	4.23%	5.63%	43.66%	46.48%	100%
Looking up new words	64.79%	30.99%	1.41%	2.82%	100%

Table 7 provides information about the frequency with which respondents use mobile devices for various activities during a typical college class. The table contains five distinct activities, including note-taking, searching for lesson materials, texting friends, posting to Facebook, and organizing social life. Each activity is divided into four categories: "very often," "frequently,"

"not very often," and "never." As shown in Table 7, just over four-fifths (89%) of the sample said they used cell phones often or very often to search for course materials, while more than two-fifths (47%) took electronic meeting notes regularly or very frequently. However, a substantial number took part in extracurricular activities often or very often: 43% texted, 16% on Facebook, and 9% organized their social life. According to the table, note-taking is the most frequent activity among the respondents, with 14.08% indicating they use their mobile device "Very often," followed by 33.80% who use it "Often," 39.44% who use it "Not very often," and 12.68% who never use it. Another popular activity is searching for lesson materials, with 49.30% of respondents indicating they use their mobile device "very often," 40.85% who use it "Often," 8.45% who use it "Not very often," and 1.41% who never use it. The respondents indicate that texting friends is less popular among them, with only 14.08% indicating that they use their mobile device 'very often,' 29.58% indicating that they use it 'frequently,' 45.07% indicating that they use it 'not very often,' and 9.86% indicating that they never use it. Only 5.63% of Facebook users say they use their mobile device very often, 11.27% say they use it often, 25.35% say they don't, and 57.75% say they don't. The least popular activity among the respondents was organizing social life, with only 4.23% using their mobile device very often, 5.63% using it often, 43.66% using it not very often, and 46.48% never using it. Finally, looking up new words is an activity that 64.79% of respondents use "Very often," 30.99% use it "Often," 1.41% use it "Not very often," and 2.82% never use it.

Table 8. Survey results on the advantages of using cell phones in class: Ranking order

Answer choices	Responses
Vigorously promotes group learning, peer support and networking	56
Availability of open access materials (for all)	49
Social media motivates interaction and friendships among students	42
Mobile devices are widespread and exploited by students	41
Provides access to current learning	39
Acts as an alternative textbook, and enhances learning beyond the classroom	25
Qualifies students for the future application of mobile technologies	21
Distant and blended learning accessible if the learner wishes, when the learner wants	17
Other: Shares educational information with friends	1
Total respondents	**71**

Table 8 presents the survey results on the advantages of using cell phones in class. The respondents were asked to rank their opinions on the benefits of using mobile devices in a classroom setting. The table shows the ranking order and the number of responses for each option. The most highly ranked advantage was "vigorously promotes group learning, peer support, and networking," with 56 respondents choosing this option. ST2 suggests: "*The use of communication tools such as messaging, video conferencing, or collaborative platforms can foster teamwork and enhance the quality of collaborative efforts*". An additional advantage was "the availability of open access materials (for all)", with 49 respondents selecting this option. ST19 said: "*Students are provided with access to digital libraries and book-sharing platforms*

that offer open-access books". The other advantages of using cell phones in class, in descending order of ranking, were "Social media motivates interaction and friendships among students" (42), "Mobile devices are widespread and exploited by students" (41), "Provides access to current learning" (39), "Acts as an alternative textbook, and enhances learning beyond the classroom" (25), "Qualifies students for the future application of mobile technologies" (21), and "Distant and blended learning accessible if the learner wishes when the learner wants" (17). ST6 highlights: "*Using mobile phones may allow students to complete schoolwork more efficiently by accessing information and resources quickly and easily*". ST26 said: "Mobile phones provide access to various *educational apps and platforms that offer interactive learning experiences*". Only one respondent chose the "Other" option, which was "Shares educational information with friends." ST13 affirms: "*Students can share links, educational content, and engage in discussions with their friends and followers fosters a learning community and knowledge sharing*". After that, students will be polled to gauge their level of satisfaction with using mobile devices in class and whether it truly supports students' learning. According to the findings, 45 percent agree to varying degrees, 23 percent disagree or strongly disagree, and the remaining 32 percent are neutral.

Table 9. Drawbacks to using mobile phones in the EFL class

Content	%
Cell phones mitigate the class's attention to themselves and others	69%
The teacher and/or teaching were mind-numbing, unattractive, or both	61%
Module materials not designed for cell phone viewing	48%
Teachers use cell phones during meetings but prohibit students from doing so in class; this is not reasonable.	48%
Bringing your own device can lead to theft	44%
Mobile phone addiction	44%
Debate about the use of cell phones in class has a bad effect on the current learning environment and teacher-student relationships	39%
Other: largely waste of time and money	7%
Total respondents	100%

Table 9 presents the drawbacks to using mobile phones in the EFL class. The table shows the different answers and the percentage of respondents who agreed with each statement. The statement with the highest percentage of agreement was "cell phones mitigate the class's attention to themselves and others" with 69%. ST5 states: "*The ringing, vibrating, or emitting of notification sounds from mobile devices can impede the flow of a class. This can disrupt both the phone user and those nearby, causing a distraction and hindering the learning process*". This was followed by "Module materials not designed for cell phone viewing" with 61% agreement, and "The teacher and/or teaching were mind-numbing, unattractive, or both" with 48% agreement. ST1 highlights: "*Long documents with dense text, such as research papers, textbooks, or extensive reading assignments, may be difficult to read on a small cell phone screen. The need for frequent scrolling and zooming may hinder comprehension and hinder focus on the content.* ST8 notes: "*Students may turn to their mobile phones to alleviate boredom*

or engage through social media, games, or other forms of entertainment if the teacher primarily delivers one-way lectures without encouraging student participation or interaction. Just under more than two-fifths (44%) of the respondents also admitted that they firmly believed they were adamant that they were cell phone addicts and used them compulsively. ST6 affirms: "*Students with a strong dependence on mobile devices often feel the need to engage in frequent phone use, even in potentially disruptive or inappropriate situations. During lectures, it is possible for individuals to engage in a constant glance at their mobile device, even when engaged in conversation*". Only a small percentage of respondents (7%) mentioned that using mobile phones in class was a waste of time and money. ST4 mentions: "*The use of mobile devices for non-educational purposes during class, such as browsing social media, playing games, or texting, may hinder students from achieving their educational objectives. This distraction of attention can be seen as a waste of valuable class time and a missed opportunity for focused learning*".

Table 10. Where respondents normally use a mobile phone for learning activities

	Regularly	Often	Rarely	Never	Total
In the library	1.43%	11.43%	20.00%	67.14%	100%
In the lecture hall	10.00%	70.00%	14.29%	5.71%	100%
During tutorials	5.63%	43.66%	36.62%	14.08 %	100%
Off campus	25.86%	17.24%	8.62%	48.28%	100%
On the bus	1.52%	19.70%	22.73%	56.06%	100%
At home	59.15%	33.80%	7.04%	0%	100%

Table 10 provides information on where respondents normally use their mobile phones for learning activities. The table shows the percentage of respondents who use their mobile phones regularly, often, rarely, or never for learning activities in six different locations: the library, the lecture hall, during tutorials, off-campus, on the bus, and at home. The results indicate that the majority of respondents engage in mobile phone-based learning activities at home, with 59% indicating a regular use of mobile devices for learning purposes. The majority of respondents indicated that they frequently engage in mobile phone-based learning activities during lectures. A smaller percentage of respondents reported using their mobile phones for learning activities during tutorials (43.66% often, 36.62% rarely), off-campus (25.86% regularly, 17.24% often), in the library (11.43% often, 20.00% rarely), and on the bus (19.70% often, 22.73% rarely). Surprisingly, it is interesting to note that a significant proportion of respondents reported never using their mobile phones for learning activities in the library (67.14%) and during tutorials (14.08%). This suggests that some students may not find mobile devices useful for learning in these settings.

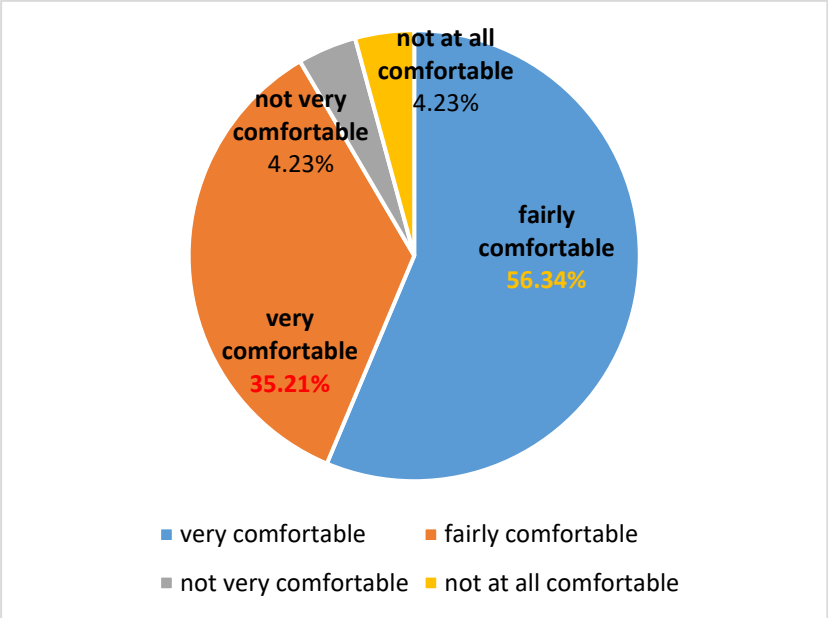


Figure 4. Level of comfort with the mobile phone use

As shown in Figure 4, it appears that the majority of respondents, approximately 56.34%, are comfortable with mobile phone use. This indicates that they have a high level of ease, familiarity, and satisfaction when using their mobile devices. Additionally, approximately 35.21% reported feeling comfortable with their mobile phone use. The level of comfort indicated is moderate, although not as strong or confident as those who occupy the very comfortable' category. These individuals may still be able to navigate their mobile devices effectively, but they may encounter occasional challenges or have areas where improvement is needed. Around 4.23% of respondents indicated they are uncomfortable with their mobile phone use. This suggests that they may encounter difficulties or lack confidence in operating their mobile devices. Certain features or functions might be confusing or challenging for them, which could lead to a less satisfying user experience. Furthermore, 4.23% of respondents expressed a lack of confidence in their mobile phone usage. These individuals may struggle significantly with using their mobile devices and may require additional guidance, training, or support to enhance their comfort level and overall user experience.

Analysis

Part One: **Type of Respondents** (Questions 1 to 4 from the survey) Of the respondents, 92.75% said they were female, and 7.25% were male. All survey respondents were from the Ho Chi Minh College of Foreign Economic Relations, doing an Intermediate Level of Business Communication in Fall 2020.

Part Two: **Procedure and Practice**, 67 out of 71 students (94.37%) reported owning at least one mobile phone. The number of students using mobile phones from 1-2 years is 50 (70.42%), 10 students (7.1%) have used mobile phones for 3-4 years, 5 students (7.04%) have been using it for 5-6 years and 2 students reported using it for more than 6 years.

Part Three: **Students' attitudes towards mobile phone use** More than a third of 36.6% of respondents agreed that mobile phones positively aided their learning, compared to 37.6% of

those who answered neutrally. Of these, just over a quarter (26.9%) of the respondents agreed that mobile phones help them plan their study in more detail, compared to 24.7%.

Part Four: **Challenges** Q13. *Does your teacher encourage you to use cell phones in and out of the classroom?* The majority of survey participants answered "yes". Surprisingly, some students said that teachers positively encourage them to use mobile devices to look up new words or when the teacher cannot explain some technical words or terms. The ST5 shared: "*I love using my mobile phone when I am looking up new words, writing essays, texting, taking photos and sharing lessons with classmates*". In addition, students also use phones as a study aid, as the ST15 confirmed: "*I use it to warn of approaching homework deadlines*". This has much in common with what can be found in the contemporary literature on the use of mobile devices as primitive tools for essay writing, note-taking, and report writing (Thornton & Houser, 2005). In addition, most respondents indicated that their teacher had utterly forbidden them to use cell phones in class. The ST23 found: "*Teachers often ban the use of cell phones during class hours because they see it as a great danger to students*" when they have a million-to-one chance. Also, another ST40 was quick to claim that none of his teachers "*supported [him] or even mentioned using cell phones to learn English because they think phones* easily *distract students from studying*".

Q.14 *Are there any cell phone features that are not applied in the classroom that you would like to use during English learning?* Respondents gave satisfactory answers to this question. The ST45 hoped: "*The phone has many functions to support my learning such as recording, filming, searching, storing and having several useful software to support foreign language learning*". However, it is amazing that Kiernan and Aizawa (2004) argued that their photo and video capture capabilities limit modern phones, as they are clearly not suitable for learning foreign languages. This is because these two functions are moving from verbal communication to images.

Q.15 *What do you think are the great hindrances students face when using cell phones in the EFL classroom?* There are technical and social limitations. Technical restrictions can be recognized by keywords such as size and small font. This is consistent with what Kiernan and Aizawa (2004) have pointed out about the disadvantages of learning on mobile devices, such as restrictions on word count, quantity of visible language and message length. Thoronton and Houser (2005) also clearly stated that the small screen of mobile phones is one of the limitations of mobile learning. Furthermore, serious social limitations can be found in students who do not use [cell phones] seriously. Some students play games or listen to music, making class noisy and uncontrolled. In addition, some teachers do not allow mobile phones to be used in class because students pay little attention to the lesson.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research

Some important limitations of this study can be named as follows. Firstly, numerical data, obtained from 71 undergraduate students majoring in Economics at a college in a given country, therefore have a small sample size and are limited by the broad context. The results can therefore be seen as illustrative rather than representative (James, 2017). In addition, this study was mainly based on constructive feedback from students studying English for Specific Purposes. In addition, this article has not suggested workable solutions using the software on the phone, nor has it systematically examined the ideal amount of time to use the phone to increase the effectiveness of learning English. Most importantly, this paper should be repeated over and over again to critically examine and fully clarify the downside of the coin, teacher awareness and the barriers to it. Furthermore, the qualitative research that led to the selection of this study is one of the research's possible weaknesses, since it is frequently plagued with

wrong turns and mistakes. To make this report as meaningful as possible, I considered it important to emphasize some of the study's primary limitations, which are as follows:

• Missing data: As previously said, when I began the data analysis step, I observed that the answer from Google Docs was not what I expected. As a result, the chance to obtain reliable data was lost.

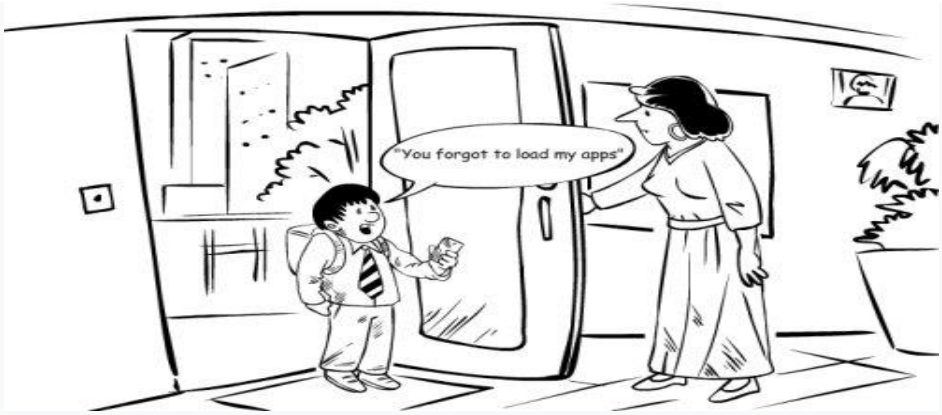
• Member checks: Due to the length of time between data collection and analysis in the study, I was only able to conduct one member check with the participant. However, this was beneficial since the participant affirmed the account was distinct and trustworthy.

Conclusion

Studies of cell phone use in the EFL classroom and language education are not a diverse topic. However, the topic of solutions to increase the feasibility and efficiency of using the phone as a useful learning tool never got too hot. Much research has been done in this area which has facilitated the use of cell phones in the classroom as a "*universal learning tool*" (Kiernan and Aizawa, 2004, p.80) and as a valuable teaching method (Thoronton and Houser, 2005). Therefore, this study aims to pave the way for serious consideration and encouragement of the active use of cell phones in the EFL classroom. In addition, it is fundamental that the use of cell phones in the classroom indirectly frees up some organizational and institutional resources such as computer rooms and laboratories, especially for Email and internet use (Kiernan and Aizawa, 2004). The research results show that students support the use of mobile phones in foreign language classes and consider them an available and very practical tool to support learning. A very large majority of the participants were comfortable with mobile use in the EFL class.

Final thoughts

For most modern students, mobile technology has become their preferred tool. The message is heartfelt: teachers and students are at the heart of learning and teaching. No phone, no matter how powerful, can completely replace the true role of teachers in the classroom (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2007).



(Source: Internet)

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Biodata

Phan Thi Anh Nga, a peripatetic teacher, prolific writer, and good speaker, empower educators to think outside the box and critically examine their established practices by asking, "*What is best for my students?*" For over fifteen years, she has been inspiring researchers and teachers of all levels with the enormous power and real joy of the teaching and learning process. Phan began her career as a university-level teacher at the Hue University of Foreign Languages from 2005-2017. Now a classroom teacher at the Vietnam Aviation Academy - HCM city, Vietnam. She has taught students of all mixed language backgrounds and abilities. Her many interests include Professional Development, English for Specific Purposes, and Technology in Teaching and Learning English and all of which require genuinely creative thinking.