

Improving English Learners' Success by Using Interactive Mobile Applications in Vietnam

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Abstract

The 4th Industrial Revolution has had a strong impact on all aspects of socio-economic life in Vietnam, including education and training. While language teachers have always struggled to find the most innovative learning method for their students, the achievements of science and technology has fundamentally changed the approach to language teaching and learning. Today, with the aid of a smartphone connected to the Internet or with English learning applications, learners can make the most of their time and place to learn foreign languages. Mobile learning is not new in itself, but modern devices with enhanced capabilities have dramatically increased the interest level, including among language educators. More importantly, via mobile-based applications, teaching foreign languages may reach out beyond traditional teaching methods, and become a way to teach students in the way they prefer to learn. The following article looks into the utilization of interactive English speaking mobile application to facilitate innovative English learning in the country.

Key words

Mobile Learning, Interactive Application.

Introduction

The rise of new digital industrial technology enables information exchange in ways that were impossible before. According to Tifarlioglu (2011), the emergence of Industry 4.0 has dramatically changed the way people use web in the field of education and in foreign language learning since 2004. Language learning and teaching is now not only in the classroom but has also shifted to other areas. A new aspect of the study has come into shape, called mobile learning. Mobile learning, equipped with interactive applications, provides study aids where students can learn through the device in an interesting and interactive way at anytime and anywhere. With the accelerated development of applications about learning English and the popularization of mobile devices among college students, students have become increasingly interested in the learning benefits that applications on mobile devices bring. Various mobile applications allow students gain access to different resources, which can play a supplementary role in the education part. In the framework of this article, the author will discuss the effect of incorporating interactive speaking application for improving the quality of language learning outside the classroom.

Literature review

1. M - learning




A new aspect of the study has come into shape, called mobile




learning. In Viberg's research (2015), m-learning is a part of e-learning activities. M-learning applies for portable small technology tools while e-learning uses all learning and teaching technologies, including mobile learning ones. Many definitions have been made of what m-learning is. Hidayat and Utomo (2014) defined m-learning as a service that gives general information electronically to the learner. They can provide the educational content which helps the achievement of knowledge without question the location and time. Brown & Mbat (2015) attributed portability, size, interactivity and ubiquity to the convenience of m-learning, especially in distance education. They believed that a learner with required skills and certain strategies can benefit greatly from mobile applications.

2. English Speaking Practice Apps

Apps are the short form of the phrase "application software" generally downloaded from app stores such as App Store, Google Play, Windows Phone Store and are intended to run on mobile phones, tablets and other mobile devices. According to VietnamNetcitizens Report (2018), the most common language learning applications in Vietnam are as followed:

Table 1: Common Apps for English Learners in Vietnam

Logo	Name	System	Skill	Paid
	FluentU	IOS Android	Speaking Vocabulary	Paid
	Memrise	IOS Android	Vocabulary	Free
	DuoLingo	IOS Android	Vocabulary	Free

	Busuu	IOS Android	Speaking	Paid
	English Speaking Practie	IOS Android	Speaking	Free
	Magoosh English Video Lessons	iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch	Grammar	Free

Inthis paper, the author experimented and measured the result of using the application English Speaking Practice developed by TalkEnglish.

3. Previous Studies

Three previous literature reviews studied research trends in mobile learning. According to Portio research (2018) in 2018, 4.4 million people use mobile applications. In 2012, Wu, Wu, Chen, Kao, Lin and Huang reviewed 164 studies on mobile learning and suggested Mobile Assisted Language Learning can not only enhance students’ English ability but also increase students’ learning motivation. Similarly, another research proved that it is efficient for college students using mobile devices to learn English by themselves (Liu & Xuan He, 2014).The rapid development of technologies has made these English learning apps have the capability to integrate different media, for example, text, picture, animation, audio and video can be integrated in orderto create a multimedia instructional material. The previous studies submit crucial issues related to m-learning. However, due to the rapid development of mobile technologies, m -learning is liable to continuous change in the years to come.

4. Research Questions

If mobile devices are integrated into ordinary teaching practice, the students would gain valuable learning time outside school. This study aims to explore the effect of using interactive mobile application in language learning and answer these questions:

- What is the effect of integrating interactive mobile application into self learning process?
- How is the interactive application perceived by learners?
- What are some suggestions for better utility of the application from learners’ perspective?

Methodology

The participants of this study were 100 first year students of Thuongmai University, 42 males and 58 females. Their major was Business English but during the first year they spent most of their time studying General English. The study lasted for 8 weeks and the application was an addition to their in-class curriculum. The research instruments were the pre-test and post-test, satisfaction questionnaire and interview.Both pre-test and post-test were developed by the instructor. On the week before the implementation of the application, the pre-test was employed. The post-test was administered 8 weeks later. The test comprises of General English Vocabulary and Business Communication. The Satisfaction Questionnaire Survey was composed to explore the students’ satisfaction toward learning with the application with a 5-point Likert satisfaction survey questionnaire (5=strongly agree; 4=agree; 3=neutral; 2=disagree; 1=strongly disagree). The survey consisted of 12 questions and 3 open-ended questions. The three open-ended questions used are as follows: (1) what do you think of the implementation of this project? (2) What

are the advantages and disadvantages of using mobile app to assist in learning English for Business Communication?, and (3) what are your recommendations for better use of the application?

Findings

1. Effectiveness

The students performed better in General Business English test. According to the statistical results, the students made significant progress on the English for Business Communication course.

Table 2: Results of Pre test and Post test

Sex		N	Average
Male	Pre test	42	41.461
	Post test	42	78.000
Female	Pre test	58	43.730
	Post test	58	88.732

2. Gender difference

The author also found difference in progress where the female members performed better than their male counterparts.

Table 3: Score Average Increase by Gender

Male	36.539
Female	45.002

3. Satisfaction questionnaire

Although not many students responded to the opened-ended questions, most of students wrote that they liked this learning approach and it was a new and interesting learning experience for them. However, due to no pressure on time and grades as in class, some students found it difficult to spare a time slot in everyday routine for mobile studying. In addition, they were easily distracted by other entertainment applications when accessing the Internet. Some students suggested implementing regular progress tests or in-class report after self-study sessions. Most students mentioned that they were able to learn some new vocabulary and professional terminology.

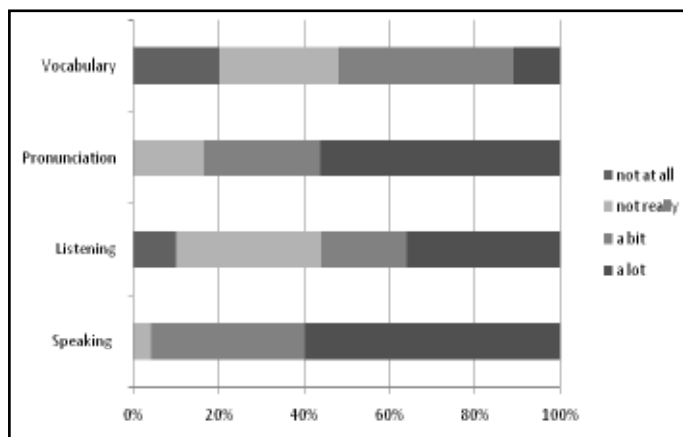


Fig. 4: English Speaking Practice contribution

English Speaking Practice is useful application, especially for Speaking and Pronunciation. The majority of students (88%) think that ESP can give tremendous help with their English during first year at university.

Discussion

The findings of the study show that interactive mobile applications can be a new approach to language teaching and learning. Additionally, integrating applications can enhance students' learning motivation, interest, and interactions in order to exchange information and share knowledge. The use of English Speaking Practice is easy and simple and it runs smoothly on their devices. The questionnaire and interview also give positive feedback on the app. Although its strengths can easily dominate its weaknesses, unfortunately the app did not become a regular habit. The future research can include how mobile apps can be studied with more guidance from teacher and in-class evaluation.

Author Note

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