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Mobile Learning as a means to promote EFL acquisition

The article considers mobile learning as a technology-based tool to advance and support the English language acquisition among the university undergraduates. It is investigated the advantages and disadvantages of incorporation of mobile learning in the course of study. The widely-used mobiles apps have been reviewed. The questionnaire on the efficiency of mobile learning has been developed.

Keywords: mobile learning; EFL acquisition; university undergraduates; mobile apps; advantages and disadvantages of mobile apps.

Nowadays, mobile learning (ML) together with other communication technology tools have become highly-valued and widely-spread among the instructors and learners of English. ML plays a fruitful role in today's education due to its portability and accessibility. Mobile devices are being increasingly integrated in learners' daily and academic life for the reason that life itself has become rather dynamic. The topic under study has attracted much attention on the part of the researches [1, 2, 4, 5], who investigated it from different perspectives: its implications in the education process, its impact on the emotional state of the learners, the extent of addiction it results in, the level of progress it provides. By definition, ML is «the exploitation of ubiquitous handheld technologies, together with wireless and mobile phone networks, to facilitate, support, enhance teaching and learning» [3]. We understand mobile learning as

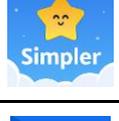
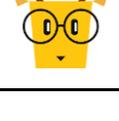
learning on the move with use of portable, wireless devices such as Pocket PCs, cell phones, palmtop computing devices and similar handheld devices. The idea of integration mobile apps in the course of EFL acquisition is relevant and up-to-date. One of the reasons is the worldwide pandemic caused by COVID-19. As a matter of fact, a lot of learners have had to switch from in-class learning to e-learning (electronic learning). In addition, some of them have faced the problem of how to spend their spare time in a more productive way. As the Go Mobile Agency states, about 20 million people are using apps for learning foreign languages. The target audience who unitizes mobile apps for educational purposes is mainly tertiary students and schoolchildren, also the second largest segment is the users aged 25–40 who can independently acquire the skills needed, improve their language proficiency and are able to make a payment.

To begin with, it is necessary to overview the advantages and disadvantages which ML has. As regards to the advantages, it worth mentioning that mobility provides opportunity for EFL learners to continue their education on the go. Mobile devices allow them to select the most appropriate course according to their needs and make their training track more customized. As for the pitfalls, which might emerge when using mobile apps, they can be divided into two types: technical and social problems. Technical problems are conditioned by the lack of the Internet access, excessive energy consumption of the device and personal information security problems. Social problems include affordability of technical tools for learning, difficulties with grading and assessment, constant notifications and advertisement. To tackle the issues mentioned, it can be advised to use the apps which have been checked and recommended by the groupmates or EFL instructors and the educational content may be split into sections or units with use of the latest remote testing technologies (proctoring).

The focus of this paper was also made on the implementation of ML for the English language acquisition, so overview of seven mobile applications to promote command of English has been given. The content and operational ability of these mobile apps have been analyzed and tested (Table 1).

Table 1

Mobile apps overview

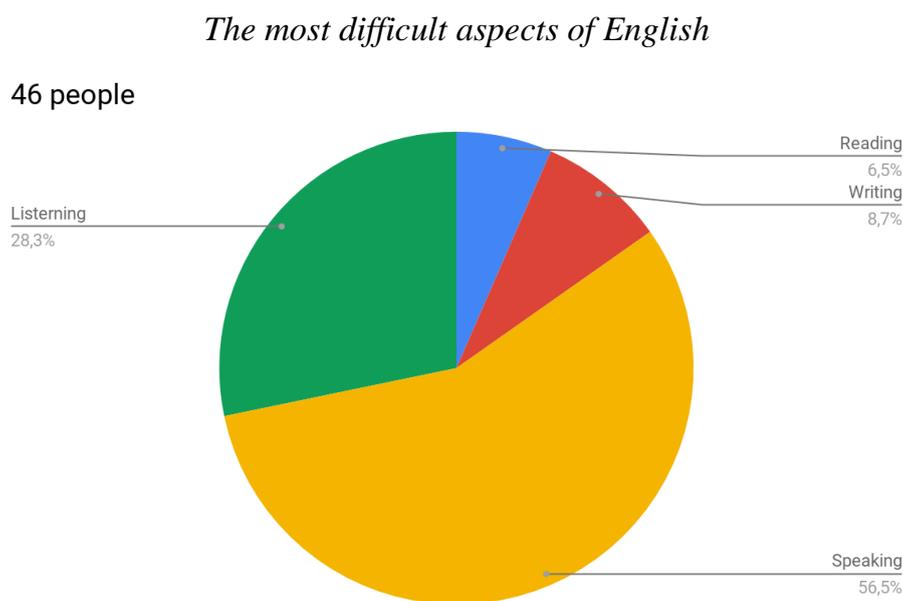
| Logotype | Name of the app | OS | Skills and aspects of the language to be trained | Payment required |
|---|--------------------|--------------|--|----------------------------|
|  | Two minute English | Android | Vocabulary | Free |
|  | Puzzle English | IOS/ Android | Grammar/ Vocabulary/ Listening | Payment is needed |
|  | Duolingo | IOS/ Android | Vocabulary | Free/ Payment is needed |
|  | Speaky | IOS/ Android | Speaking | Payment is needed |
|  | Simpler | IOS/ Android | Grammar/ Vocabulary | Free |
|  | Busuu | IOS/ Android | Vocabulary/ Speaking | Free/ Payment is needed |
|  | LingoDeer | IOS/ Android | Vocabulary | Free/ Payment is needed |

To discuss the research findings regarding the efficiency of mobile apps in the course of EFL learning, the questionnaire was developed. The purpose of the survey was to reveal the students' opinion, experience and attitude to mobile apps for advancing their command of English, so 46 students of one public technical university were involved. It comprised several questions:

- Have you ever used any mobile apps for learning English?
- Do you know any of the apps mentioned: two minute English, puzzle English Doulingo, Speaky, Simpler?
- Do you agree that ML is efficient method to learn English?
- Would you like to have mobile apps integrated in the course of study?
- What aspects of learning English are the most difficult for you to acquire?

According to the results of the survey, it was found out that about 56,5% of the respondents used the mobile apps for learning the language. The following mobile apps were familiar to 58,7% of students who participated in the opinion poll: two minute English, puzzle English Doulingo, Speaky, Simpler. About 70% of respondents answered that they consider ML to be an efficient way to acquire the English language. 30% of students want to use mobile apps, recommended by their EFL instructor, in the course of study. Finally, the most difficult aspects of English mentioned by the students are presented in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1



The results of the experiment confirmed that mobile apps are rather popular in the field of education and great amount of respondents confirmed their experience in using mobile apps for academic purposes in order to promote the English language acquisition. Nevertheless, only 30% of respondents would like to apply mobile apps for learning English in the classroom. Based on the results of the survey, the most effort and time-consuming aspects of language learning are listening and speaking. It could be assumed that the students of the public technical university need to train these aspects more intensively. In this regard, Puzzle English and Speaky might work for this purpose best of all.

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**Focusing on contracted forms in English:
language exposure and acquisition opportunities
(based on EFL course materials analysis)**

The article focuses on English contractions, mainly contracted auxiliaries, used in the English language. It is considered the types of contracted forms and their use in spoken and written language. Some of the most common and uncommon contracted forms have been listed in this article. The potential of course material, used in EFL setting in a public technical university, has been analyzed.

Keywords: English contractions; common and uncommon contractions; EFL course materials; language exposure; language acquisition opportunities.

It goes without saying that contracted forms (known as short forms) have been investigated rigorously from different perspectives by the researchers. There are many studies devoted to contractions investigation with grammatical or register-related focus, type of contractions and their use in spoken and written language have been examined as well [2, p. 172], [3, p. 219], [5, p. 130]. By definition «contractions are a shortened form of a word formed by omitting one or more letters which are most often replaced with an apostrophe» [7]. In fact, an apostrophe is applied to point the place of the missing letters in written