

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF MOBILE APPLICATIONS AND LEARNING CENTERS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract:

This research paper explores the preferences of English language learners when choosing between mobile applications and traditional learning centers, with a focus on young learners in Navoi, Uzbekistan. The aim was to understand which learning method is seen as more effective for acquiring English proficiency. A total of 120 participants, elementary school students and high school students, were selected to represent two distinct age groups and educational stages. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using a descriptive approach.

The survey was designed to collect detailed insights regarding learners' usage habits, perceptions of effectiveness, and overall preferences. Findings revealed that, despite the popularity and accessibility of mobile applications like Duolingo and Babbel, a majority of respondents favored traditional learning centers. The reasons included the value of real-time interaction, teacher guidance, structured lessons, and peer support.

The study also highlighted differences between the two groups. Elementary students generally relied more on structured environments, while high school students appreciated the discipline and depth offered by in-person instruction. While mobile apps were often seen as helpful for practice, especially in vocabulary and listening, they were rarely considered sufficient for mastering productive skills like speaking and writing.

Based on the results, this study recommends a blended approach that integrates the strengths of both digital tools and traditional instruction. Encouraging more interactive, communicative elements in mobile learning and making classroom

instruction more engaging through technology may create a more balanced and effective language learning experience.

Keywords: English language learning, mobile applications, traditional learning centres, learner preference, survey-based research.

Introduction

The methods for learning English shifted during the past few decades. Formal classroom learning is no longer the most effective way to learn the English language. Modern technology and different educational philosophies have changed things. There is now a broader array of options available, such as English video classes, multimedia resources, and mobile apps that claim to make language learning much simpler and faster. Such comprehensive methods have raised hopes for providing better educational opportunities, especially in poor economically developed regions where quality instruction is very difficult to obtain.

Of all these tools, mobile applications appear to have the greatest impact. Millions of people now use apps such as Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise. These apps provide personalized and interactive instruction tailored to each learner's needs. The global market for language learning apps is projected to increase by USD 29.96 billion from 2022 to 2026 according to a report by Technavio. This growth results from increased adoption of smartphones coupled with the need for more innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Proponents of mobile learning argue that these tools offer flexibility, enabling learners to work on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and listening exercises from anywhere, and can even surpass traditional approaches.

While mobile learning is convenient and provides a variety of options, physical learning institutions remain significant in the teaching of English. Face-to-face classes offer numerous benefits such as interaction with a qualified teacher, prompt responses, an organized learning system, and interaction with other students. All of these factors are crucial in developing communication, cultural, and critical thinking skills which far exceed rote memorization vocabulary and grammar as Richards (2006) puts it.

A conversation is still ongoing among educators, researchers, and learners regarding the most appropriate and effective method of learning English: mobile applications or physical learning institutions. Some research studies emphasize the motivational value of mobile applications, as well as the autonomy that learners have (Godwin-Jones, 2017). Other research studies, however, have pointed out the negative effects they have on learners when it comes to developing productive speaking and writing skills (Burston, 2015). An individual's preferences are often influenced by factors such as their age, learning preference, socio-economic status, and their personal objectives associated with learning the language.

This study aims at examining these differences in two groups of learners: elementary students and graduate high school students. Both groups constitute critical stages for learning the language, but they differ in terms of psychological maturity, educational needs, and exposure to technology. The research intends to determine which of the two options — mobile apps or conventional learning centers — is more favored for teaching English as a foreign language through a mobile app-centric survey.

Data from the survey indicates a strong inclination towards traditional learning centers for both groups. This provokes underlying issues as to why face to face instruction is perceived more positively despite the widespread availability of digital tools. It indicates that while technology is well integrated into the learning process, it is still clear that most learners appreciate the well-organized, interactive, and social aspect of learning from centers.

The subsequent sections of this paper will describe the method used to obtain survey data, detail the results obtained, and analyze what are the implications of the results. The study speaks to the relationship between technology and traditional methods while modern language education by examining the preferences and experiences of young learners across two distinct educational levels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past two decades, researchers and educators have shown increasing interest in how different methods of instruction influence the acquisition of English as a second or foreign language. Among these, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and traditional classroom-based education have emerged as two

primary modes, each with its own set of advantages and limitations. Specialists in applied linguistics and educational technology have explored the effectiveness of these approaches across various learner demographics and cultural contexts.

A number of studies have emphasized that learner preferences are often shaped by accessibility, technological familiarity, and learning style. For instance, Godwin-Jones (2017) argues that mobile learning tools provide learners with autonomy, flexibility, and personalized pacing, which can be especially motivating for young learners. Similarly, Stockwell (2010) highlights the potential of mobile platforms in reinforcing vocabulary and listening skills, particularly when used consistently over time.

On the other hand, traditional learning environments are still widely recognized for offering more structured and comprehensive support. According to Richards (2006), in-person instruction allows for real-time teacher feedback, direct interaction, and a social atmosphere that promotes communicative competence. Classroom-based learning is also seen as better suited for developing speaking and writing skills, which often require immediate correction and peer collaboration.

While there is significant research on the benefits of mobile learning globally, there is limited literature that examines how learners in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan, perceive these modern methods compared to conventional classroom settings. One of the few researchers who has focused on this region is Dilnoza Khodjayeva, whose work at the Uzbek State World Languages University addresses digital learning trends among Uzbek EFL students. Her findings suggest that while mobile apps are useful for extra practice, learners still depend heavily on structured, teacher-led lessons for real comprehension and fluency.

Several global studies, such as those by Kukulska-Hulme & Shield (2008), also stress that mobile learning should not be viewed as a replacement for classroom instruction but rather as a supplementary tool. These studies propose a blended learning model where both approaches are integrated to maximize learning outcomes. This perspective is echoed in research by Burston (2015), who cautions against overestimating the effectiveness of mobile apps, especially in developing countries where access to devices and internet connectivity remains inconsistent. In summary, existing literature highlights both the promise and the limitations of mobile learning in the context of English language acquisition. However, there is

still a gap when it comes to understanding learner preferences in transitional educational contexts like Uzbekistan, where traditional methods still dominate but digital tools are becoming increasingly widespread. This study aims to contribute to that gap by comparing the perceptions of elementary and high school-aged learners regarding mobile apps versus learning centers.

METHODOLOGY

This study implemented a quantitative research design to compare learners' preferences for mobile applications and traditional learning centers for studying English. The main aim was to identify which method learners found more helpful for developing their English skills and which one they considered more effective overall. A descriptive methodology was used to assess and evaluate the information retrieved from the set questionnaires.

The participants in this study were divided into two groups of English language learners. The first group consisted of elementary school students currently enrolled in Grades 4 and 5, typically aged 11 to 13. The second group included high school students in Grades 10 and 11, aged approximately 15 to 18, who are expected to graduate within the next one to two years. This grouping allowed the study to compare preferences at two different educational stages. Each group consisted of 60 participants, totaling 120 students surveyed from School № 22 in Navoi.

A total of 120 participants were involved in the survey:

- 60 elementary school students
- 60 high school students

Participants were selected from School № 22 in Navoi. The sample consisted of learners from various categories which included difference in gender, socio-economic stratum, and prior exposure to learning the English language.

The data was gathered through a survey questionnaire particularly formulated for this study. The questionnaire had both closed questions and items based on a Likert scale. These questions were designed in order to gauge the participants' experiences, preferences, and beliefs regarding the two English language learning methods: mobile applications and traditional learning centers.

The survey was organized into three principal parts:

1. Demographic Information: This section collected basic details of participants like their age, gender, current class, and previous exposure to English.

2. Learning Method Usage: Respondents were inquired on their usage of mobile apps (for example, Duolingo, Babbel, Memrise, Busuu) and their attendance to traditional learning centers.

3. Preference and Perception: Respondents were requested to identify which learning method they preferred and give reasons for their choice. Additionally, they were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of each approach in developing specific language competencies such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The survey was carried out physically. Researchers gave clear instructions and responded to questions in case the participant needed any clarification. For the elementary school students, the language in the questionnaire was made less complex for them to understand it better.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data from the survey. Frequencies and percentages of the participants that favored mobile applications over traditional learning centers were computed. Cross tabulations were also done to analyze the preferences of two groups; the elementary students and the high school students.

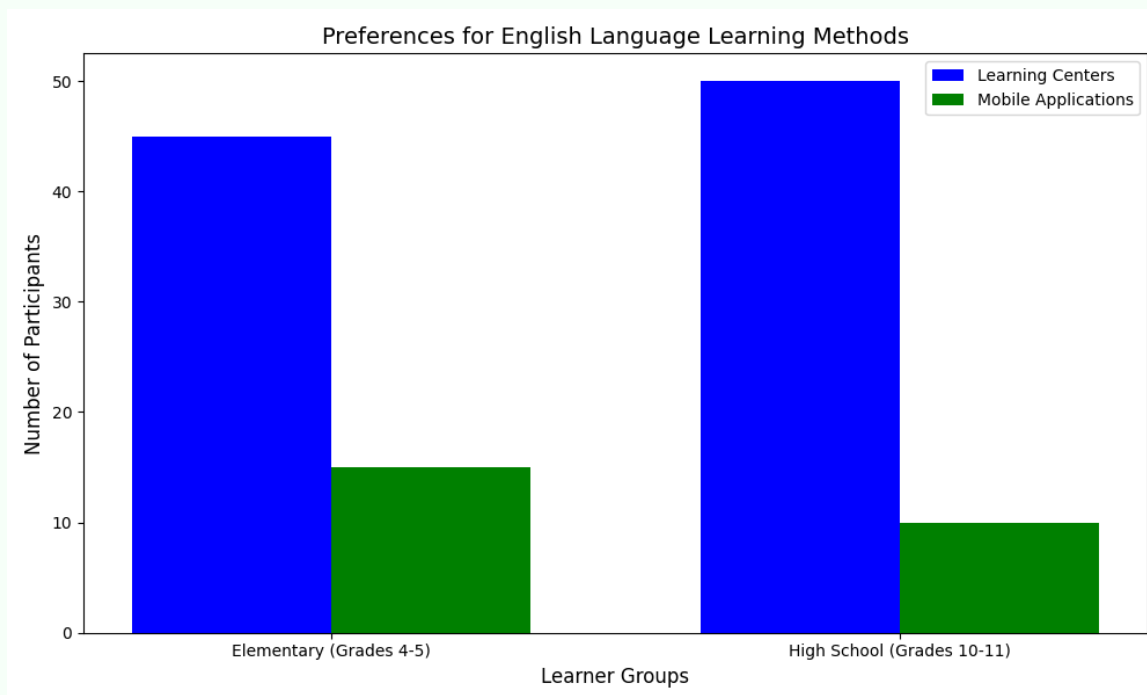
Apart from the numerical data, participants' answers for the choices they made were analyzed thematically. This made it easier to establish reasons and patterns that were behind their choices. These results provided their context to the quantitative results.

RESULTS

This section shows the results of the survey that was done to test the choices participants made when regarding the means for learning the English language; mobile applications or traditional learning centers. The data captured from these two groups elementary school students and high school students is presented in the following descriptive statistics and graphs.

A total of 120 participants responded to the survey, consisting of 60 elementary school students and 60 high school students. Students were asked to choose their preferred English learning method from mobile apps and conventional learning centers.

To explain these results graphically, the appending bar graph depicts the number of learners from the derided groups who preferred learning centers to mobile apps.



Out of the 60 elementary school (Grades 4 and 5) students surveyed:

- 45 students (75%) expressed a preference for learning centers.
- 15 students (25%) preferred mobile applications.

Among the 60 high school students (Grades 10 and 11) surveyed:

- 50 participants (83.3%) preferred learning centers.
- 10 participants (16.7%) chose mobile applications.

The two groups of learners consistently preferred learning centers to mobile apps. However, the degree of preference for learning centers was stronger among high school students than in elementary students. This means that as learners progress in their education and likely develop a greater need for language skills, their preference for more formal, teacher-centered instruction increases.

Along with indicating their preferred method of learning, participants were invited to briefly explain their choices. These responses, however, were not written without a general direction.

The participants wishing to explain learning center usage said that:

1. There are teachers available to offer assistance and provide corrections instantly.
2. Students can interact with the teacher and practice speaking.
3. Students are expected to learn in a disciplined environment with set goals and regular attendance.

Those appending mobile applications commented:

1. Flexible learning provided enables them to master the subject matter incrementally.
2. Learning becomes highly captivating and stimulating within gamified environments.
3. Independent studies are more economical and accessible for many people.

A significant number of respondents prefer traditional learning centers over mobile apps regardless of whether they are elementary school students or high school students as per the data obtained from the survey. Even though mobile apps were praised for their flexibility and ease of use, the learning centers were determined as more valuable for their organized teaching, social contact with other learners and teachers, and overall foster environment for acquiring diverse language skills.

DISCUSSION

The mobile application-based approach has faced significant resistance from both younger learners and, to an even greater extent, high school students, particularly in the context of learning English as a foreign language. While this rejection might initially seem surprising, it is important to recognize it as a key insight into the students' perceptions of various language teaching methods. This reaction becomes even more noteworthy when considering the current state of technological advancements and their impact on educational strategies.

The fact that nearly 75% of elementary school students and 83.3% of high school students prefer traditional learning centers suggests that structured, face-to-face learning is still highly valued by students. This preference remains strong despite the flexibility and convenience offered by mobile applications. Several factors likely contribute to this inclination.

For one, traditional learning centers offer a formal style of teaching with professional instructors. Such settings permit immediate response to questions posed and aids to learning that is custom made to meet the needs of the learner. These approaches are very crucial for learning a new language (Richards, 2006). The real time interaction of learners and teachers was also mentioned as it enables learners to practice language skills with real life relevance. Many participants put forth these benefits when they were asked to justify their choices.

The social aspect of learning centers should also not be ignored. Particularly, as far as younger learners like elementary school students are concerned, the learning environment offers community, motivation, and responsibility which are frequently lacking in mobile learning which is self-directed and relies on self-discipline that many younger learners have not developed yet.

The preference to attend learning centers was significantly higher among high school students. Their heightened educational maturation and more sophisticated language learning objectives are likely to raise their need for structured guidance, moderate instruction, and sophisticated language practice at an advanced level. Furthermore, learners at higher levels aiming at greater proficiency seems to see the use of mobile applications as inadequate for the productive skills of speaking and writing that are best accomplished with active participation (Burston, 2015). This study confirms earlier works stressing the shortcomings of mobile language learning applications in fostering high levels of language proficiency (Godwin-Jones, 2017). The use of mobile applications has had a positive effect on accessibility as well as for enhancing student's vocabulary and grammar skills (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013), but when it comes to aiding students in developing integrated higher level language skills and meaningful communication, the power of mobile applications is restricted.

In addition, the results corroborate Richards' (2006) claim concerning the development of communicative competence through active real-time interaction, which is characteristic of self-paced applications. This particular study emphasizes the need to focus on human interaction when constructing language courses, especially on the integration of productive skills and cultural components.

There is a great deal to be interpreted from the data findings concerning educators, policy makers, and technological education specialists. Even though mobile application tools are highly useful adjuncts, they ought not to be considered as substitutes for the traditional approach, especially for students who need more teacher led instruction and social engagement.

Educational mobile tools should be integrated into the curriculum without removing traditional teaching methods. This would allow students to enjoy mobile applications while still having the benefit from the interactive and sociable learning environment offered by learning centers.

These results suggest the need to improve the interactive and mechanical features of some language learning mobile application software for its users. For example, mobile learning may be enhanced via the inclusion of direct teaching, practices of verbal communication in real time, and teaching together in one case.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of mobile apps and traditional learning centers on English language acquisition through the learner's choices among elementary pupils and high school students. A systematic survey conducted with 120 respondents showed that both cohorts preferred leaning the English language in traditional learning centers compared to mobile apps.

The results imply that mobile applications are flexible, accessible, and captivating; however, they tend to be perceived as additional tools rather than real means of learning. Meanwhile, mobile learning centers are still appreciated for their real teaching, direct interaction, and the organization which are all needed for the proper acquisition of a language competencies.

The results of the study are very important for teachers and government officials because they suggest policy changes. People have to accept that mobile learning technologies build new possibilities, but should not be regarded as teaching methods on their own. To avoid ruining the significant benefits of human elements and structured leaning guidance, mobile applications need to be incorporated within the framework of formal education to better the language learning processes.

Considering the preference of traditional learning centers in this research study, it will be more appreciative to note the shortcomings of its analysis. The analysis is geographically and demographically shallow, and relies entirely on self-reported data without employing objective measures of learning outcomes. Subsequent studies need to analyze the efficacy of these methods of teaching and learning over a longer period of time and wider population scope in order to establish more holistic impacts.

As a final observation, this research study confirms the incorporation of significant traditional learning in English language education with substantial focus on mobile technology alongside its applications as effective supplementary aids. The attempt to fully integrate all aspects of learning may prove to be the

most effective for learning English as a second language within current educational systems.

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