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The Attitudes of Undergraduates toward the Use of Mobile Applications for Learning English

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Abstract

Although extensive research has been conducted on the positive impact of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on student learning, there have been few studies examining university students' attitudes toward the use of MALL for English learning. The study investigates the attitudes of university students toward MALL, focusing on the use of mobile applications to learn English. This study's participants are the English department at a private university in East Kalimantan. This study employs a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview for data collection. The findings from this analysis demonstrated that students had a favorable perception of the usefulness of MALL in various aspects of language learning. They perceived English mobile applications as beneficial for improving their language skills, enhancing work quality, and promoting motivation. These positive perceptions indicated that MALL had the potential to be an effective tool in supporting language learning among students.

Keywords: Attitude; Mobile assisted language learning; undergraduate; learning English

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1. Introduction

Academics, including lecturers, other stakeholders, and students, must address the issue of the low quality of English Language Education graduates with special and seriousness. In addition, numerous studies have been conducted on students' low performance in English language learning, such as the Challenges of Learning English in Australia toward Students study. There were no strict rules for the pronunciation of their native language, for example (Nguyen, 2011). In addition, motivation can impact students' freedom, attention, effort, patience, the frequency with which they employ learning strategies, and their learning success (Zhou, 2012).

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In the current digital era, educators hold a pivotal responsibility in the preparation, organisation, and facilitation of classroom learning endeavours. The matter of substandard English Language Education graduates demands the utmost attention of academics, encompassing professors, other stakeholders, and students alike. During the contemporary digital age, educators hold a pivotal position in the facilitation, organization, and management of instructional endeavors within the classroom setting (Osifo, 2019). Hence, mobile phones and smartphones have attained a status of veneration, a modernity, and an item of such critical importance that a significant proportion of students are unable to function without them. The swift progress of technology is leading to significant transformations in environments, which in turn are driving societal advancements. Higher education institutions are subject to technological changes and advancements and must conform to this technological evolution to enhance and enhance the teaching-learning process.

The swift advancement of application technologies has facilitated the integration of diverse media forms, such as text, image, animation, audio, and video, into English language learning applications. This incorporation of multimedia instructional materials aims to engender students' engagement and motivation in the learning process. According to the EDUCAUSE Horizon Report - 2019 Higher Education Edition Alexander, B., Ashford-Rowe, K., Barajas-Murphy, N., Dobbin, G., Knott, J., McCormack, M., Pomerantz, J., Seilhamer, R., & Weber (2019), M-Learning has been recognized as the foremost technological innovation in the realm of higher education. English-learning applications are readily available to college students. Hung & Zhang (2012) posit that mobile technologies offer a multitude of opportunities and advantages, such as their adaptability and pervasiveness. The scholars are endeavoring to determine the impact of mobile learning on the process of language acquisition.

Hwang et al., (2016) have presented research that highlights the benefits of a mobile learning approach that involves students utilizing their knowledge in practical scenarios and generating valuable learning resources, leading to enhanced language proficiency. Park & Slater (2015) conducted a study to examine the current usage of mobile devices for language

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learning among college-level ESL students, as well as the attitudes and opinions of their instructors towards Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Several studies have investigated the reception of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners (Wan Azli et al., 2018) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Chen Hsieh et al., 2017; Chung et al., 2015; Rachman et al., 2022). These studies have found that learners have responded favorably to MALL due to its perceived usefulness and ease of use in language learning, particularly in relation to the utilization of mobile devices. The research findings indicate that the favorable reception of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) by learners has a significant impact on their disposition and conduct towards the sustained utilization of mobile devices for academic pursuits.

The importance of mobile applications (apps) as effective tools for attaining and obtaining particular learning goals cannot be disregarded when discussing mobile devices and their close correlation with advancements in education and learning. The objective of this study is to ascertain the categories of English mobile applications that are employed by students in tertiary education, along with their evaluations of the efficacy and user-friendliness of mobile applications for the purpose of English language acquisition. The anticipated outcome of this research is to make a scholarly contribution to the existing body of literature on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in the context of college-level English language acquisition.

2. Method

The present study employs a mixed-methods research design, which involves the integration of both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques and utilizes a specific research methodology as outlined by Creswell (2014). The study procured qualitative data through conducting interviews with students. The collected data was subjected to analysis and interpretation, followed by description, in order to determine the specific type of smartphone applications utilized by students to facilitate their English language learning. In addition, the quantitative data is derived from the administered questionnaires that are designed to gather

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precise information regarding students' perceptions of the integration of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), with a particular emphasis on its utility. The survey instrument utilized in this investigation was derived from a questionnaire adapted from Darsih & Asikin (2020). The questionnaire items underwent modification and were subsequently classified into three distinct categories.

The first category pertains to open-ended inquiries concerning the participants' identity, while the second category comprises statements that address the efficacy of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) in the acquisition of English language skills. The present investigation employed a Likert scale consisting of five response options to obtain measurements. The present study enlisted 134 participants from the English education program. However, not all students were included in the interview component of the research.

The questionnaire data was subjected to quantitative analysis utilizing descriptive statistics, whereas the interview data was subjected to qualitative analysis. Subsequently, the collected data underwent a process of thematic reduction to facilitate the identification of overarching patterns and themes that align with the research objectives of this study. Through the process of data reduction, information that exhibited similarities was grouped into more general themes. Subsequently, the collected data underwent a process of organization prior to undergoing data interpretation, whereby the outcomes were analyzed and interpreted to yield significant findings.

3. Findings and Discussion

The study had sample of 45 males and 89 females who participated in answering the questionnaires. This provides a total sample size of 134 respondents. Females make up the majority, accounting for approximately 66.4% of the respondents, while males constitute around 33.6%. Moreover, the analysis reveals that the age ranges of the respondents in the study are varied. Among the sample of 134 participants, the majority falls within the 20-22 years old category, accounting for approximately 66.42% of the total respondents.

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This suggests a higher representation of individuals in this age range within the study population. The next significant age group is 16-19 years old, which comprises approximately 23.88% of the sample. A smaller proportion of respondents, around 8.21%, fall within the 23-25 years old range. Furthermore, a minority of respondents, approximately 3.73%, are over the age of 25.

Table 1 Students' Perceptioan Towards the Usefulness of MALL

No	statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	Using English apps on my smartphone enhances the quality of my work/task	28.4%	53.7%	15.7%	1.5%	0.7%
2.	I have more control over my work by using English apps on my smartphone	13.4%	61.2%	21.6%	3.7%	0%
3.	English mobile applications help me complete tasks quickly	24.6%	53%	20.9%	1.5%	0%
4.	The English smartphone program enhances my abilities to talk, read, listen, and write in English	18.7%	62.7%	17.2%	1.5%	0%
5.	The use of English mobile applications improves my efficiency	16.4%	59%	22.4%	2.2%	0%
6.	The use of English mobile applications enhances my English vocabulary, grammar knowledge, and pronunciation	23.9%	60.4%	14.2%	1.5%	0%
7.	Using English mobile applications enables me to complete more work than would be possible otherwise	14.2%	52.2%	29.9%	3.7%	0%
8.	Using English mobile applications makes learning the material easier	19.4%	55.2%	20.9%	3%	1.5%
9.	Using English mobile applications increases my productivity at work	11.9%	42.5%	39.6%	6%	0%
10.	Using English mobile applications encourages me to study English more	14.9%	53%	30.6%	1.5%	0%
11.	In general, I find English mobile applications beneficial for my education	20.1%	61.2%	18.7%	0%	0%

Table 1 provided offered valuable insights into students' perceptions regarding the usefulness of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). The analysis of the data sheds light on the overall trends and attitudes of the respondents. In general, the majority of students

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expressed positive perceptions towards the use of MALL. For example, more than half of the respondents (53.7%) strongly agreed and 28.4% agreed that using English apps on their smartphones enhanced the quality of their work or tasks. This suggested that students believed that incorporating English apps into their language learning process positively impacted their performance.

Furthermore, the data indicated that students felt a sense of control over their work by utilizing English apps on their smartphones, with 61.2% agreeing and 13.4% strongly agreeing. This finding suggested that students perceived MALL as a means to exercise autonomy and manage their learning process more effectively. The respondents also recognized the efficiency and practicality of English mobile applications. Approximately 53% agreed and 24.6% strongly agreed that these apps helped them complete tasks quickly. Moreover, a significant portion (60.4% agreed, 23.9% strongly agreed) believed that using English mobile applications enhanced their vocabulary, grammar knowledge, and pronunciation. These findings suggested that students perceived MALL as a valuable tool for improving language skills and overall language competence.

Interestingly, the data showed that students saw the potential of MALL in increasing their productivity at work, with 42.5% agreeing and 11.9% strongly agreeing. Additionally, a considerable proportion (53% agreeing, 14.9% strongly agreeing) indicated that using English mobile applications encouraged them to study English more. These results suggested that MALL had the potential to motivate students and foster a positive attitude towards language learning. Overall, the findings from this analysis demonstrated that students had a favorable perception of the usefulness of MALL in various aspects of language learning. They perceived English mobile applications as beneficial for improving their language skills, enhancing work quality, and promoting motivation. These positive perceptions indicated that MALL had the potential to be an effective tool in supporting language learning among students. However, it is important to consider that individual experiences and preferences may have varied, and

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further research could explore specific factors influencing these perceptions and their impact on language learning outcomes.

Table 2 Theme and subtheme Students' Perception Towards of MALL

Theme	Subtheme	Sample of Excerpts
Learning English with Mobile assisted language learning	Implementing YouTube for learning English	When I'm at home, I watch YouTube videos with English subtitles to practice listening and add vocabulary about the video I'm watching. (Participant 2)
	Implementing twitter for learning English	I prefer to use the Open space feature by listening to native speakers speak, as well as reading IELTS material threads and having access on Google Drive on the Twitter platform (Participant 1)
	Implementing Instagram for learning English	learn to understand the correct language structure and grammar by reading posts on Instagram. (Participant 4)
	Implementing Tiktok for learning English	Many short videos from TikTok have helped me such as TOEFL tips, IELTS and several similar FYI accounts about learning English. (Participant 2)
	Implementing google translate for learning English	I use google translate to find meaning or new vocab from sentences that I read in Twitter threads (Participant 3)

Based on table 2, the student interviews revealed a subtheme that demonstrated the adoption of a mobile application in a university. The use of a mobile application in a student institution provides multiple benefits and improvements to various parts of student life. The introduction of a mobile app offers students easy access to key information and services.

The interview results revealed that participants used YouTube to learn English. For instance, Participant 2 stated:

> When I'm at home, I watch YouTube videos with English subtitles to practice listening and add vocabulary about the video I'm watching.

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According to the participant, viewing videos with subtitles provides an opportunity to enhance one's listening abilities by exposing them to natural English speech. Exposure to diverse accents, intonations, and speech patterns facilitates acclimation. Furthermore, when individuals view videos accompanied by subtitles, they may come across unfamiliar vocabulary and expressions that were previously unknown to them.

The interview results also showed that participant used twitter for learning English. For instance, Participant 1 said:

> *I prefer to use the Open space feature by listening to native speakers speak, as well as reading IELTS material threads and having access on Google Drive on the Twitter platform.*

The availability of open space facilitates the opportunity for participants to actively engage in listening to diverse individuals expressing their respective thoughts and opinions. Exposure to diverse perspectives has the potential to augment individuals' comprehension of varied cultural and linguistic contexts. It is noteworthy that participants are able to integrate various language skills by means of combining Open space listening, IELTS material reading, and utilization of Google Drive resources. This methodology has the potential to enhance the general English language proficiency by involving receptive skills such as listening and reading, as well as productive skills such as speaking and writing.

The interview results also showed that participant utilized Instagram for learning English. For instance, Participant 4 said:

> *Learn to understand the correct language structure and grammar by reading posts on Instagram.*

The brevity of Instagram posts can be attributed to the character limitations imposed on the platform. The succinct structure of this format can confer benefits to individuals who are acquiring a new language, as it facilitates targeted reading and expeditious evaluation of linguistic patterns and grammatical conventions. Furthermore, through the act of observing the writing and sentence construction of others on Instagram, one can acquire knowledge regarding proper language structure and grammar utilization. Comprehending sentence structure, verb

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conjugation, arrangement of words, and conjunctions, among other elements of grammar, is encompassed in this.

The findings of the interview revealed that the participants employed the utilization of Instagram as a tool for enhancing their English language proficiency. As an illustration, the second participant expressed:

> *Many short videos from TikTok have helped me such as TOEFL tips, IELTS and several similar FYI accounts about learning English.*

The participant acknowledged that TikTok accommodates a heterogeneous spectrum of content creators, encompassing informative accounts that provide instruction on the English language. This particular type of education affords students the opportunity to investigate diverse pedagogical approaches, viewpoints, and educational resources, thereby empowering them to discover materials that align with their individualized learning proclivities. Moreover, the interactive functionalities of TikTok, such as the ability to leave comments and express approval through likes, cultivate a sense of communal engagement among individuals who are studying a foreign language. Individuals have the opportunity to interact with content producers and fellow learners, inquire about subject matter, exchange personal experiences, and gain knowledge from one another's perspectives and recommendations.

Another finding of the interview revealed that the participants utilized Google Translate as a tool for English language acquisition. As an illustration, the third participant expressed:

> *I use google translate to find meaning or new vocab from sentences that I read in Twitter threads.*

According to the participants, the utilization of Google Translate facilitates a more comprehensive sentences that may comprise of unfamiliar words, phrases, or idioms. Through the process of translating these sentences, individuals can acquire a more efficient understanding of the general meaning and contextual implications. Additionally, Twitter threads frequently offer succinct and condensed information within a particular framework.

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The utilization of Google Translate as a tool for sentence comprehension can facilitate learners in acquiring a more lucid comprehension of the topic under discussion in the thread.

The primary aim of this research was to determine the types of mobile applications in the English language that are utilized by students in higher education. The present study involved the distribution of a questionnaire to a sample of 134 students enrolled in Private Universities. The results of the data analysis indicated that the participants held a positive perception regarding the efficacy of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in diverse domains of language acquisition. The participants held the view that the utilization of English mobile applications could be advantageous in terms of augmenting their language proficiency, elevating their work standards, and fostering their drive to succeed. The affirmative perceptions expressed by the participants suggest that Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) holds promise as a viable means of facilitating language acquisition among students. M-learning has proved to offer the advantage of providing opportunities for EFL learning supported by a significant amount of research within this field (Hsu, 2013).

Based on the students' interviews, they had frequently implemented online platforms particularly, YouTube, Instagram, Tiktok, and Google translate for education purposes. In addition, the interviews showed that those platforms can be adapted to facilitate learning activities. The finding is similar to another study conducted in Turkey investigated students' perceptions of the use of a YouTube channel specifically designed for an academic speaking skills course and found that the majority of students benefited from the videos on the playlists of the channel (Balbay & Kilis, 2017).

Moreover, the study found that social media platforms, including Instagram, can be used to influence the process of students' distance learning in the English language through a targeted system of measures. Similarly, another study conducted in Indonesia explored the use of digital strip comics on Instagram to address educational issues. The study found that students responded positively to the comics in terms of format and relevance and reacted positively to the comics based on attractiveness and satisfaction (Ramazanova et al., 2022).

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4. Conclusion

The influence of the widespread usage of mobile technology in learning is an area of concern for English language educators. However, when used properly, it can encourage universal access to education resources. The application of mobile technology for education has been adopted in much of the developed world, though research has only recently begun to focus on M-learning for teaching EFL/ESL. As a result, various perceptions that have developed may influence teachers' and learners' expectations of M-learning and direct the applications concerned. The findings of this research contribute to determining the source of this perception and acceptance. The perception acceptance level is positively associated with the acceptance perception of M-learning for EFL.

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