

Publication date: December 4, 2018

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.2529556](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2529556)

Philosophical Linguistics

THE USE OF MOBILE INTERACTION TECHNOLOGIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN A NON-LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY

Avdeev, Alexander Aleksandrovich¹

¹Candidate of Philological Science, Assistant Professor
Voronezh State Technical University, Voronezh, Russian Federation
E-mail: alexander77777@mail.ru

Abstract

The present article is focused on the use of modern mobile interactive technologies in teaching and learning English in non-language universities. It considers the features of using mobile applications at English classes, presents a list of mobile technologies, used in the process of study, and assesses their scientific, methodological and didactic potential. In our study, we substantiate the necessity for wider use of mobile applications for training various language skills and improving the trainees' command of English.

The paper contains the review of definitions, characterizing mobile language education and reflecting the viewpoints of prominent scholars on the problem of mobile learning. The main goals of mobile learning are outlined, along with the benefits of mobile applications as a tool of language education. The article also gives practical recommendations for students on how to employ mobile applications and programs in their practical study of English.

Keywords: Informatization, language education, mobile technologies, potential.

I. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary period of social development can be described as a period of the dominant influence of information technologies, affecting all spheres of human activity and forming the global information space. The informatization of modern Russian society creates prerequisites for informatization of education as a whole, and, in particular, for language education. The intensive introduction of the latest information, communication, scientific, methodological and didactic technologies in foreign language teaching is accompanied by creation of innovative forms of language education.

According to Polat E.S., new pedagogical and other technologies that are currently used or only emerging in the minds of scientists and teachers are unthinkable without the widespread use of new information technologies [Polat, 2002:72]. One of the most perspective areas at the contemporary stage of informatization in language education is the use of mobile interactive technologies. Their widespread introduction contributes to enrichment of the learning process, as well as to acquisition of skills and abilities by students. Their formation and development on the basis of traditional teaching aids is quite a laborious task. In addition, the undeniable advantage of such technologies consists in the fact that their use helps to save classroom time in the context of a limited number of study hours allocated for learning foreign languages by students of non-linguistic specialities.

Learning via mobile phones or mobile learning provides students with the opportunity to study when they are in the bus, in the street or at work. In fact, they can learn where they want. The two main characteristics of mobile devices are portability and connectivity. With regard to communication, the design of the mobile system should be able to be in contact and communicate with the training website using the device's wireless network to access educational material everywhere, including short message service (SMS) and mobile e-mail. Portability allows students to move with a mobile device and obtain learning materials [Huang,C. and P.Sun:2010]. Klopfer and his colleagues single out the following properties of mobile devices:

- 1) Portability. Such devices can be used in different places due to their small size and weight (for example, by buying a mini earphone, you can get your hands free from a phone);
- 2) Social interactivity: data sharing and collaboration with other students can be carried out using mobile devices;
- 3) Context sensitivity. The data about mobile devices can be collected and related uniquely to the current location and time;
- 4) Connection. Mobile devices can be connected to other devices, data collection devices or a network by creating a common network;
- 5) Individuality. The activity of the platform can be customized for each student [Klopfer, E.; K. Squire, and H. Jenkins:2002].

The widespread influence of the market has increased the popularity of a mobile phone, and it satisfies the needs of teachers by providing tools and software for students in learning contexts. In addition, compared to other wireless devices, such as laptops, mobile phones are relatively inexpensive and have the functions of Internet browsers. With such low-cost devices that are accessible even to the poorest areas and have e-mail or SMS functionality, you can also transfer information from mobile phones between teachers and students without any difficulty.

It should be noted that the use of mobile technologies for solving problems in the field of language learning is not yet sufficient. Even in cases of universities, having a sufficient number of mobile user devices, the classes involving their use are often conducted not by professional linguists, but by teachers of computer science. This does not allow us to say that the capabilities of mobile devices are fully used in education.

II. METHODOLOGY

The article describes the modern mobile interactive technologies for teaching English in terms of their scientific, methodological and didactic potential. The methodological base of this research consists in the fact that a student is a subject of education and self-development. We used the comparative analysis and the method of survey to reveal the core features of mobile technologies, the scope of their application and the opportunities they offer.

III. DISCUSSION

At present, there are several definitions of mobile learning in foreign pedagogical literature, based on technological features and didactic possibilities, offered by these technologies. According to the project «MoLeNet», mobile learning is the use of convenient portable mobile devices and wireless, always available technologies to facilitate, support, optimize and intensify the processes of teaching and learning.

According to another definition, mobile education is the activity, regularly carried out by compact, portable, mobile devices and technologies, which enables the learners to become more productive by communicating, getting or creating information.

In general, most researchers conclude that the unique nature of mobile learning, compared to traditional and contemporary teaching methods, such as e-learning and mixed learning, lies in the fact that students are not linked to a specific time and place, always having access to the training material at any convenient time. As noted by J.Traxler, mobile devices and technological are increasingly changing the nature of learning (both formal and informal) and alters the ways that learning can be delivered. Learning that used to be delivered «just-in-case», can now be delivered «just-in-time», just enough and «just-for-me». Finding information rather than possessing it or knowing it becomes the defining characteristic of learning generally and of mobile learning especially, and this may take learning back into the community [J.Traxler, 2009, p. 14]. H.Jarvis points out that mobile devices allow for crossing of boundaries between formal learning inside the classroom and informal learning outside the classroom.

The main goals of mobile learning can be described as follows:

- convenient communication at any time and in any place, broadening the opportunities of collective work;
- the optimized use of mobile devices, available to students;
- compact storage of material, always at hand;
- the intensification of the learning process;
- the correlation between the level of educational progress, the present-day social demand and the trainees' interests;

Despite the fact that most educational institutions do not welcome the use of mobile devices in the classroom, the benefits of their application are obvious, that is:

- the improved access to education;
- the use of relatively cheap present-day technologies;
- the opportunity to learn in one's own pace in confidential conditions, which may not be available when using a school computer or equipment, belonging to other people;
- good support for popular ways of interaction, for instance, the mobile access to audio materials or social networks;
- meeting the specific educational needs;
- satisfying the needs, which are beyond the university curriculum through the access to extra resources via podcasts or free educational materials.
- the opportunity for students to immediately share impressions of the educational process;
- the best assessment and analysis of possible problems in training;
- the best psychological support for students at risk through social networks or with the help of a personal tutor.

IV. RESULTS

It should be noted that the proper work with an electronic dictionary requires the teacher's instruction and the development of students' skills in working with information, available on reference websites and applications. The teacher's recommendation in choosing one or another resource is also of great value.

First of all, it is important to teach students to work with such monolingual, intelligent dictionaries as «Merriam Webster Dictionary» and «Dictionary.com», which, besides the description of lexical meaning, contain examples of the use of lexical units, and, thus, allow to obtain information about words, phrases and idiomatic expressions within a context. Apart from transcription, these dictionaries contain audio recording of word pronunciation.

In the category of monolingual dictionaries, «The Free Dictionary by Farlex, Inc» is noteworthy. This application allows you to conduct a simultaneous search in a number of dictionaries and encyclopedias, as well as in specialized terminological dictionaries for various industries, for example, in explanatory dictionaries of legal terms as «Free Law Dictionary» and «Nolo's Plain English Law Dictionary».

Among the currently presented bilingual dictionaries, we can single out the translators' system «Multitran». However, when using bilingual dictionaries, the trainees are often far from being able to extract necessary information from a vocabulary entry. For instance, they select the most frequently used meaning, with no account of the others. The use of this application can be recommended for students of advanced level, because this dictionary contains a large number of word meanings which are not sufficiently systematized and will be redundant at the initial stage of education.

The mobile translators, such as «Language Translator» and «Google translate», help you to translate words, phrases and sentences using Google online translation service. It is important to explain to trainees that the translation, obtained by these means, is not always adequate.

Next, we would like to focus on applications that are designed to develop lexical skills of students and enrich their vocabulary. Many of these electronic applications are game-based and designed for self-learning of English.

The «MyWordBook» application is composed as an interactive notebook for English learners. The vocabulary of this application is presented as a set of interactive flash cards, arranged both in random order and in the form of thematic groups, corresponding to three levels of complication. Each flashcard is provided with a definition, an example of usage, taken from the dictionary «Cambridge University Press», a translation, fields for notes, an audio example and an image.

The English language application «with Words» is designed to enrich the vocabulary through fun lessons in a playful way. «With Words» helps to activate memorization of new words, practise their spelling and audial perception. A feature of this application is that each of the eight proposed modes are focused on developing specific skills in the use of lexical units. During the lesson, students are invited to perform several exercises of different types, for example, memory training cards, choosing the correct audio translation or participation in puzzling mini-games.

One of the latest technologies, having the opportunity of practical application in language learning, is so-called moblogging, i.e. the combination of a mobile phone and weblogging. Mobile blogging is defined as the use of a mobile phone or a personal computer for posting words and pictures on websites. The blogs themselves is a recent trend in language teaching. They provide opportunities for teamwork and creating your own language (i.e. journaling). Moblogs have the potential to broaden these opportunities, shifting temporal and spatial boundaries and adding authentic personal visual content.

The digital audio files (for example, MP3) provide genuine, high-quality sound in the compressed format. Portable media players, used for listening to them, are also quite compact. Among them, Ipod is the most well-known, and its latest version provides functional capability in video and sound transmission. The accessories of Ipod (e.g. microphones, speakers, etc.) are just as popular, as well as software, including language learning programmes. For example, iLingo is a downloadable language software for translation or an electronic phrase dictionary.

V. CONCLUSION

The projects under review indicate that mobile technologies have broad opportunities (e.g. the formation of necessary language and speech abilities and skills, standardized and formative testing, organization of independent work, etc.). With rational distribution of study time and thoughtful use at classes, these projects can contribute to increasing the students' motivation, the efficiency of the educational process and the academic performance.

Having analyzed foreign and domestic experience in the use of mobile technologies when teaching English at a university, we came to the conclusion that the global process of integration can be virtually represented in the form of two large groups:

- 1) mobile projects aimed at optimizing the monitoring and assessment system when learning a foreign language at high school;
- 2) mobile projects aimed at development of various types of speech activity.

The first group is characterized by reconsidering the control system with reference to requirements of the modern educational process. Much attention is paid to formatting and summative assessment. The methodology of using mobile technologies is based on the areas of alternative control, such as self-assessment, group assessment and mutual assessment. Among the main integrated mobile applications, we can distinguish mobile mail, training and non-educational applications as well as the systems of survey, evaluation and feedback.

The second group is characterized by emergence of methods of using mobile technologies for practising foreign language skills and abilities, which are applied in addition to traditional techniques.

Both groups possess a number of strong and weak points. Their advantages include the increase in academic motivation and performance, the independence from location and time, the immediate interaction between a teacher and students, the individual approach to trainees and the creative approach to task execution. Among the possible cons are the complicated access to the Internet, low speed of connection, small screen size of a mobile device and the cost of certain applications.

Speaking about the prospects of introducing mobile technologies in the process of learning English, we must stress that the main contemporary trends in education are accessibility, openness, interactivity, visualization and gamification. The integration of modern mobile and digital technologies fully contributes to realization of these trends.

In conclusion, it must be said that the use of mobile technologies in teaching and learning English at universities, complying with contemporary requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard, is a perspective trend. The knowledge of the experience of domestic and foreign colleagues represents one of the necessary conditions for successful integration, along with the need to organize investigative and methodological work. Thus, the promising directions for implementation of mobile learning at the university level can include the analysis of mobile services and applications, the study of their didactic properties and functions, and developing the methods of learning English, based on mobile technologies.

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