

Effectiveness of Mobile Applications to Improve English Vocabulary

Khongorzul Tuvshinkhuu

Dr. Széll Krisztián László

Integrating mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) in English vocabulary education has transformed traditional teaching methods and created alternatives. Mobile devices provide advantages in several domains (e.g., motivational and entertaining learning, flexibility) (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). With these benefits, however, also come a few disadvantages: limited functionality of the mobile device, devices' cost, insufficient battery life, storage issues (Al-Said, 2015; Aygül, 2019; Fujimoto, 2012), unequal distribution of devices and internet access, inability to follow the progress of the students, and uncertainty about the efficiency of using these devices (McQuiggan et al., 2015). Hence, mobile learning has turned out to be one of the burning issues in practical application and academic research (Burston, 2021).

This study will primarily address the learners' vocabulary acquisition while analysing how mobile applications shape these aspects of vocabulary development. It examines the effectiveness of mobile applications for English vocabulary acquisition, comparing their effectiveness with traditional teaching approaches and examining the factors that influence effectiveness.

This study adhered to a systematic literature review to comprehensively address the research goals, primarily qualitative, descriptive, exploratory, synthesising, and thematic (Gough et al., 2012; Zawaczki-Richter et al., 2020). The systematic literature review followed the steps of the PRISMA protocol (Page et al. 2021a, 2021b). Based on 19 English empirical studies published between 2013 and 2024 and systematically analysed, this study presents key elements of mobile applications, such as gamification, adaptive learning, and multimedia integration, contributing to vocabulary acquisition, retention, and learner satisfaction.

The study found that mobile applications such as Quizlet, Duolingo, Kahoot, and other popular language learning applications increase learner motivation through interactive and game-based features and use personalization to meet learner needs. Spaced repetition algorithms and direct feedback, essential for long-term memory, have been developed. However, challenges remain, including technological limitations, unequal access to devices and gadgets, and the lack of social interaction in some applications. Mobile applications consistently outperform traditional methods regarding learner satisfaction, engagement, and the flexibility to learn anytime, anywhere.

This study highlights the interplay between motivation, app usability, cultural relevance, and content authenticity in creating MALL's success. Practical implications include teacher training and policy support to ensure equitable access and integrating mobile applications into formal language education systems. Recommendations for future research include the long-term effects of mobile-assisted vocabulary learning and the applicability of applications in diverse cultural, social, and economic contexts.