A Systematic Review on Mobile Technology-Assisted English Learning

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ABSTRACT

Mobile English language learning has drawn global attention. This study systematically examined the literature in the recent eleven years. It visualized the general trend of the number of related publications in a decade; discussed the attitudes of teachers and learners toward mobile device assisted English learning; explored the effect of motivation on mobile device assisted English learning, discussed the influence of mobile device assisted English learning on output and input English language skills; presented the influence of mobile device assisted English learning on vocabulary knowledge acquisition; demonstrated the factors influencing the effectiveness of mobile English language learning, showed the general learning outcomes in mobile device assisted English learning; together with the disadvantages of mobile technology-assisted English learning and co-citations of publications. When designing mobile devices, designers could include and optimize learning functions based on the findings.

KEYWORDS

Attitudes, English Learning, Input and Output Skills, Mobile Device, Motivation

INTRODUCTION

Mobile learning was defined as the learning mode assisted with small-sized portable devices, where learners could have easy access whenever and wherever (Yu, Zhu, Yang, & Chen, 2018). They could be applied to learning contexts (Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler, 2005). Mobile learning was also referred to as the education or training dependent on small devices such as PDAs, palmtops, handheld computers, smart phones or mobile phones (Keegan, 2005).

This study focuses on mobile English language learning because English, as the most popular language, has caught attention of the largest number of mobile device-assisted learners. Over the past decade, there have been numerous studies devoted to effectiveness of mobile technologies used in English learning. Mobile technology-assisted learning is defined by Lan and Sie (2010) as a novel kind of learning approach enabling learners to have convenient access to learning contents with no restriction of time and space via wireless connections. Mobile technology-assisted learning has been reported effective due to its flexible learning mode anytime and anywhere, which, difficult to be realized in traditional learning, is dubbed “ubiquitous learning” (Hwang et al., 2011). It has been

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suggested that mobile technology is an effective tool, which can facilitate language learning and teaching process (Cavus and Ibrahim, 2009).

Mobile technologies have played an important role in improving language learning and teaching via the mobile applications. However, it was found that English learners preferred laptop, smart phones and tablet PCs to traditional tools in English language learning, which was frequently hindered by English language teachers. More often than not, learners tend to use mobile devices for non-academic activities, e.g. gameplay, music and videoplay (Dashtestani, 2016).

Although mobile technologies such as mobile phones were forbidden to use by teachers and parents in many classrooms due to the possibly caused distractions, it was believed that they could be effective in promoting learning and teaching if they were wisely used (Hilao and Wichadee, 2017). Mobile technologies could improve access to educational resources and promote learner-oriented, personalized, collaborative, situated and ubiquitous learning (Valk, Rashid, and Elder, 2010).

There have been an increasing number of studies highlighting the effectiveness of use of mobile technologies in English language learning, use of serious games in education (Yu, 2019a), mobile device-aided flipped English classrooms (Yu, 2019b), mobile learning platform (Yu, Zhu, Yang, & Chen, 2018), serious game-aided English vocabulary acquisition (Yu, 2018), and technology acceptance model of a mobile learning technology (Yu, & Yu, 2019). However, fewer studies have shed light on the literature review on this popular issue since 2008, the beginning year of research into use of mobile technologies in English learning.

With the fast development of mobile technologies, future research into mobile English learning will most likely continue to prosper. It is therefore necessary to review recent research into this field in order to summarize the findings and provide a valuable reference for researchers and practitioners. This study, therefore, attempts to review the literature on use of mobile technologies in English learning in the recent decade and attempts to reveal the hidden rules governing mobile learning and teaching.

Considering the fields in need of further exploration, this systematic literature review aims to provide a summarized and updated review of past studies on mobile learning and teaching, especially in terms of English language learning. The grounded learning system design guides this review study, which refers to the process of linking learning activities to related theory and practice (Hannafin et al. 1997: 101). Through this system, we try to connect the theoretical framework to related research results. The review focuses on the effectiveness of mobile device assisted English learning, as well as its disadvantages, which establishes the foundation for research questions as follows:

**RQ1:** What is the general trend of the number of related publications?

**RQ2:** What are the attitudes of teachers and learners toward mobile device assisted English learning?

**RQ3:** What is the effect of motivation on mobile device assisted English learning?

**RQ4:** What is the influence of mobile device assisted English learning on output and input English language skills? The major difference between RQ4 and RQ5 is that the former focuses on the general English proficiency, while the latter sheds light on the specific English vocabulary knowledge acquisition.

**RQ5:** What is the influence of mobile device assisted English learning on vocabulary knowledge acquisition?

**RQ6:** What are the factors influencing the effectiveness of mobile English language learning?

**RQ7:** What are the general learning outcomes in mobile device assisted English learning?

**RQ8:** What are the disadvantages of mobile device assisted English learning?

**RQ9:** What about co-citations of publications on mobile technology-assisted English learning?

This research question aims to solicit co-citation clusters, citation counts, bursts, centrality, and sigma of previous studies in order to provide references for future scientific research into mobile technology-assisted English learning.
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