

Enhancing EFL Non-Native Speakers' Communicative Skills, Grammatical Competence and Pronunciation Using Mobiles

تعزيز المهارات التواصلية للمتحدثين غير الأصليين في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية والكفاءة النحوية والنطق باستخدام محاضر مساعد كالهواتف المحمولة

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المستخلص

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو التتحقق من استخدام التعلم بمساعدة الهاتف المحمول ودوره في تطوير مهارات القراءة والكتابة لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لصف الرابع ، إتقان القواعد ، والنطق. تكونت عينة الدراسة من ٣٠ طالبة في مدرسة ثانوية الوحدة للبنات خلال الفصل الدراسي الثاني من العام الدراسي ٢٠٢١-٢٠٢٠. أجرى الباحثون مقابلات للتحليل النوعي. أشارت النتائج إلى وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في متوسطات درجات المجموعة التجريبية في الاختبار البعدي. يدعم نكرة البحث أن تقنية الكمبيوتر اللوحي تؤثر على مهارات القراءة والكتابة لدى الطلاب ، وإتقان القواعد اللغوية ، والنطق.

الهواتف المحمولة وسيلة اتصال مؤثرة وعصيرية ومقبولة وعالية السرعة. يمكن لدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية الاستفادة من ميزات وإمكانيات الهاتف المحمول ويمكن للطلاب تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية بطريقة أسهل وأكثر قيمة ونجاحاً ومساعدة كاملة. هذه المقالة هي محاولة للتحقيق في تكنولوجيا الهاتف المحمول التي تم دمجها في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of mobile-aided learning and its role in developing fourth grade EFL learners' literacy skills, grammar proficiency, and pronunciation. The sample of the study consisted of 30 female students at Al-Wehda Secondary School for Girls during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021. The researchers conducted interviews for the qualitative analysis. The results indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental group on the posttest. The research supports the idea that one-to-one tablet technology does impact students' literacy skills, grammar proficiency, and pronunciation. Mobile Phones are influential, fashionable, acceptable, and high-speed means of communication. Teachers of English can take the benefits of mobile features and capabilities and students can learn English in an easier and more valuable, successful, and helpful way. The present article is an attempt to investigate mobile phone technology that is integrated into learning the English language.

Instruction and Background of the study

Utilizing educational technology in teaching and learning English has changed the teachers' and learners' roles and practices, teaching changed from "teacher-centered into student-centered" (Bataineh and Al-Abdali, 2015: P. 243). Correspondingly, technology provided learners with an "authentic language learning experience" (Bataineh and Al-Abdali, 2014 P. 160). Educational technology provided users of English with various tools and options that enabled learners and teachers in the process of language development (Al-Abdali, 2016). Our classes ignore the importance of reading and writing in communication. Literacy skills are crucial issues in foreign language learning. Besides, utter a good pronunciation of words means conveying the message directly. Grammar also has the same importance of other skills. This study tried to focus on using mobile technology to develop the ignored and forgotten important skills (Literacy Skills, Grammar Proficiency, and Pronunciation).

Technology-Assisted Language Learning

Technology-aided language learning has become "a popular method of English classes since it replaced the traditional teaching and learning with digital touch screen methods. Mobiles are the forms of the new teaching and learning methods. This opened the door for learners to get their learning outside and inside classrooms" (Al-Abdali and Al-Temimi, 2018,

p. 143). More importantly, Al-Abdali (2017) argues that “over the past few years, new different types of methods-technology based had brought into FL classes by many teachers depending on results of several researchers that emphasizing the importance and the necessity of using technology in classrooms” (p.273). According to Abbas and Elttayef (2019) adopting technology in education is vital to develop EFL learners’ communicative language.

Users’ proficiency after using mobiles has assisted in reducing the time needed for developing other skills. The operational education had shifted from restricted surrounded walls into open-world education. Distance learning, flipped classrooms, e-learning, and virtual learning have changed the meaning of teaching and learning. Mobile learning has certain benefits for language classes as well and allows language teachers to offer access to an authentic content, communicative language practice, and task completion (Chinnery, 2006).

According to Prensky (2005), mobile phones are not just communications devices for interaction between people; they are in fact computers that fit in your pocket, are always with you, and are always on. Like all computing devices, mobile phones can be used to learn. So rather than fight the kids coming to school carrying their own powerful learning devices—why not use the opportunity to their educational advantage? In addition to what was mentioned previously, there are several specific mobile features that support instruction. For example, texting has a lot of classroom applications. Texting can be used for written chats and communication between teachers and students.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and Development (M-Education)

Mobile learning, or m-learning, is an escalating branch of the e-learning movement. MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) has developed to maintain students’ language learning with the increased use of mobile technologies. With MALL, students can access language learning materials and to keep in touch with their instructors as well as friends whenever and wherever they want (Zhao, 2005).

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is any type of language learning that takes place with the help of portable devices. “MALL differs from computer-assisted language learning in its use of personal, portable

devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access and interaction across different contexts of use" (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008, p. 273).

Mobile phones theoretically make learner-centered learning possible by enabling students to customize the transfer of and access to information to build on their skills and knowledge and to meet their own educational goals (Sharples et al., 2007, p. 223). M-Learning thus exerts a democratizing effect on the learning experience as learners take greater responsibility for the learning process instead of being passively fed information by an instructor. Whereas in traditional models of education the goal is the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, m-Learning empowers students to actively participate in the learning process to make it a process of construction and not mere instruction (Dela Pena-Bandalaria, 2007). According to Elttayef (2016) "With the rapid development of technology, foreign language classes are in need of adopting and utilizing different kinds of technology, in other words, technology should be brought into our classes as effective tools for second language learning and acquisition" (p.39). Moreover, Bataineh and Al-Abdali (2014) stated that "The new forms of communication is becoming an integral part of modern life finding their place in the language classroom, offering new exciting modes of communication for engaging learners in authentic language learning experiences" (p. 160). Teaching goals cannot be achieved alone without the help of technology (Al-Abdali, 2016). Additionally, mobile, like other technological tools, has its unique features which made it the preferable tool and the choice number one for all learners. Learners prefer to do their school homework at home because they sometimes want to share ideas and consult each other before doing so. Mobile is the best tool to achieve this purpose. It can be used inside and outside classrooms. Homework sometimes needs access to the internet and uses e-books and online libraries. With mobile technology, it is easier for them to do their homework and save effort and time. Besides, they may perform better than in traditional classes. Because, mobile supply users with many features, e.g., fast save of folders, they can use headphones to listen to audio lessons, they also can use writing programs to write the homework and send it to their instructors.

Over the past few years, IT-driven teaching of English is very successful in making the learning of language live and interesting. Like CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) may also prove to be very helpful in honing language skills. Teaching the English as a Second Language demand a high level of innovation and integration of various teaching techniques (Mehta, 2012). Al-Abdali, (2014) argued that “using technology in education in general and in teaching the English language, in particular, has been the goal for many educators for many years. The use of technology in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning and teaching included mobile phone technology, mobile-assisted language learning(MALL), computer-mediated communication (CMC), CDs, DVDs, films, iPads, iPods, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), data shows, iPods, intranet, internet, multimedia, etc. These types of technology can be regarded as effective tools in the educational operation” (p. 212).

Mobile learning is a type of e-education and e-learning which enables learning through its different using applications and services. Mobile servers helpful and useful for people in many ways. For example, mobile spirit communication with people, via audio-visual and text chat. Accordingly, tablet as an effective tool allows users to engage creatively with their learning and surroundings. Technology, because of its versatility, can be effective in creating a classroom that offers students a more interactive and collaborative environment.

Mobiles eratically and applicably changed the role of students from passive listeners to active participants. Students get rid of the tragedy of memorizing a large amount of importation. They became able to use language directly and according to the needed situations. There is no need to memorize irrelevant information which is and with the passing time became useless because they could not find the way in the students' daily life. They were memorized for the sake of passing examinations only. Accordingly, this is not a good way of teaching and learning. Via mobile-centered teaching, an online assessment is also available for teaches. Instant feedback is also possible.

Review of related literature

A study conducted by Thornton and Houser (2003) claimed that Short Message Service (SMS) text messages can be used to send out vocabulary items at spaced intervals, thus increasing student retention. In circular writing, students can frame a story together by contributing one text message at a time. Each student writes a sentence or two and then sends this on to the next student, who adds another message, and so on until the story is finished. In addition to all these user-friendly services, mobile phones can be the best source for promoting and developing a better understanding.

Gheytasi , Azizifar , and Gowhary (2015) investigated the impact of using such cell phones on increasing the reading comprehension competency of English language learners in the city of Liam, Iran. To realize this objective, a sample of 40 high school students (boys and girls) was chosen as a sample of the study. The participants were divided into two groups; namely experimental and control. Using pre-test and post-test as well as the SPSS software application, the study evaluated the difference in scores of these groups regarding the reading comprehension capability. The results show a significant difference between the experimental and control group following a month of using the application. Accordingly, cell phones improved to be an effective tool for developing the reading comprehension of EFL learners.

Gaskell & Mills (2010) examined in their research paper titled—Can we learn from mobile handheld devices? They concluded that there is much evidence that mobile technologies are playing an increasing role in education and the use of mobile technologies is increasing in the developed world in several areas, for instance in context related education, and how hand-held devices can be used for basic language, skills.

Volle (2005 as cited in Baniabdelrahman, 2013) investigated the acquisition of oral skills in an online course for Spanish learners. The project involved creating audio e-mails in which students read aloud chosen passages and performed grammar drill activities. They also were asked to use audio e-mails to record two speaking activities – one before the start of the course and the other at the end. These then were compared to get a better picture of the enhancement in students 'oral performance. The findings revealed that students' oral proficiency had significantly improved.

Hwang, Huang, Shadiev, Wu, and Chen (2014) investigated whether designed learning activities supported by a mobile learning system for students to develop listening and speaking skills in English as a foreign language (EFL). It was found that students had positive perceptions and intentions toward learning activities; thus, students were motivated to practice English skills more when using a mobile learning system. The results demonstrated how students' speaking and listening skills practices using mobile devices had different correlations depending on their proficiency levels.

Methodology Participants

The sample of this study consisted of 30 female students at Al-Wehda Secondary School for Girls who were randomly selected out of 80 students during the second semester of the academic year 2020/2021. Students' average ages are 16-17 years old. The researchers divided them into two groups; an experimental group which was consisted of 15 students and taught using the tablet-aided method, and a control group which was consisted of 15 students and taught using the regular communicative method.

Statement of the problem

Nowadays the main goal of teaching English as a foreign language in Jordan is to enable students to communicate with English speakers and develop their communication skills and proficiencies. Even though Arab world students spend nearly 12 years learning English as a foreign language, but in fact the students' English proficiency remains to a certain extent low, they still cannot speak fluently, write appropriately, pronounce correctly, and use grammar exactly in the way it is used by native speakers of English. This weakness may be attributed to various factors, including the English curriculum, the unnecessary use of Arabic in instruction. Besides, the use of authentic materials e.g. tablets has not yet received enough attention in EFL classes. The in-class exposure to authentic input is very rare though studies (Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) have noted that instructional materials in a differentiated classroom provide choices to students in their academics, promote determination, and positively affect

motivation have provided evidence to support the efficiency of such materials in the learning process.

Authenticity adaptation in the foreign language classroom could be achievable solution. Nonetheless, the gap here is that the use of authentic materials has not yet received the much-required attention in EFL classes. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate how using mobiles may contribute to the development of EFL students' proficiency in English.

Questions of the study

1. Are there any statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group taught using the mobile-aided method and the control group taught using the traditional method?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups in literacy skills, grammar proficiency, and pronunciation due to using mobiles at $\alpha \leq 0.05$?

The Hypothesis of the study

Given the above question, the present study tries to provide empirical supports for the following hypothesis:

HO1. There are not any significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group taught using the tablet-aided method and the control group taught using traditional methods.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the use of tablet technology in the classroom and determine whether tablets can positively influence students' writing accuracy, speaking fluency, pronunciation ability, and grammar competencies.

Significance of the Study

The importance of investigating this study is:

- 1- This study may support the process of teaching and learning English by shedding more light on the importance of integrating the innovated instructional technology e.g., tablet in language learning.
- 2- The present study is significant because it provides valuable insight into the use and impact of tablet technology as a classroom tool.

Limitations of the Study

- 1- The study is limited to 30 female students at Al-Wehda Secondary School for Girls in Thi-Qar.
- 2- The study is also limited to using mobile technology in the learning and teaching process.

The Validity of the test

A team of five doctors and professors who are specialized in TEFL, CALL, linguistics, instructional technologies, and psychology validated the test. They validated the test in terms of scores distribution among questions, the period of the test, spelling, and grammar.

Instrument

To achieve the purpose of the study by answering the question, the researchers utilizes the following instruments:

1. The Proficiency test: A consisting of two questions from *English for Iraq* was given to the experimental and control groups at the beginning and end of the course. Each learner was required to speak and write. This test was considered to determine the subjects' proficiency performance before and after adopting the experiment. The test is described in the following two sections:

- a. **A speaking proficiency (oral test):** A test that tested student' ability to speak appropriately. Students are required to talk about their education, hobbies, interests, and themselves. Students are required to respond to five questions.
- b. **A written proficiency test:** A test that measured students' ability to write correctly with coherence and cohesion. Students have to write about five different subjects. Punctuation and capitalization are required in the writing process.

2. The Grammar test: A test that consisted of five questions that test a students' grammatical competence and if learners can write good grammatical structured sentences and if they are able to make the connection between words and their meanings, this connection should be syntactically and semantically well connected. This test

also measures students' organization of paragraphs. The content should be well designed.

3. The Pronunciation: A test that consisted of a list of English words. Students are required to pronounce all of these words to measure their pronunciation especially the end of the words, for example, the words that end with 'r' and 'i', etc.

4. The Interview: in addition to the types of questions mentioned previously, interviewing students is a very important measurable test. The interviewers who were native speakers of English are the only persons who can measure students' fluency and pronunciation more efficiently and scientifically than non-native speakers. Accordingly, this test can be regarded as a supported test to make sure of students' performance in proficiency before starting the experiment. All the tests are adopted at the beginning and the end of the experiment study.

Procedures

The experiment lasted for two months. It was started in January and finished at the end of February (2020). That was the actual period of data collection. The researchers divided the chosen sample of the study into two groups, experimental and control groups. Both groups were interviewed before starting the experiment to measure their actual proficiency performance. Pre-post tests were administered at the beginning and the end of the experiment. Both groups were taught the same material on the same days of the week, Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday. The experimental groups taught using the tablet-aided method. The control group was taught using the regular communicative method.

Operational Definitions of Terms

- **Mobile technology:** Mobile assisted language learning is a teaching method that uses mobile phone technology as a way of stressing learner-centeredness and autonomy (Alemi, Sarab, and Lari, 2012).
- **Proficiency:** It refers to learners' writing accuracy and speaking fluency.

- **Grammar:** It is a set of structured words and phrases that are written systematically. It is the field which studies deals with structures. Besides, the use of the right tense.
- **Pronunciation:** It refers to the appropriate use of commas, capitalization, full stops, apostrophes, etc.

Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test analysis of writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation test held as a pretest. It revealed that the mean score of the experimental group (14.49) is higher than the control group (13.77). Nevertheless, results show the homogeneity of both groups in terms of their proficiencies. In other words, there are no statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the pretest regarding writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation test ($t = 1.65$, $df = 49$, $p > .05$). Accordingly, both groups are equivalent before starting the experiment.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation of Both Groups in writing, reading, grammar, and pronunciation in the Pretest

	Group	N	Mea n	Std. Deviatio n	Standar d error mean	T	D f	P
Pretest	Experimental	15	14.49	1.36	.26	1.6	5	.07
	Control	15	13.77	1.39	.25	1.6	49	.6

Table 2 presents the results of paired sample t-test run to compare the performance of the control and experimental groups independently on the writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation pretest and posttest. Results show that there were significant differences between the mean scores on writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation pretest and posttest of the experimental group ($df = 24$, $t = -11.45$, $p < 0.05$), but there was no significant difference between the mean scores on writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation

pretest and posttest of the control group ($df= 24$, $t= -1.69$, $p<0.07$). These results revealed that only participants in the experimental group taking part in tablet-aided learning courses improved regarding their writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation. The performance of the experimental group has developed better than the control group. The researchers attributed this development to the new method of teaching used in this study which is the tablet. As a result, the tablet can be regarded as an effective tool to develop learners' writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation competencies. To end this discussion, the tablet has a positive effect on EFL learners' writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation.

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviation of Both Groups in writing, reading, grammar, and pronunciation in the Pretest and Posttest

Group	N	Mea n	Std. Deviation n	Standar d error mean	T	D f	P
Experimental					24		.00
Pretest	1	14.49	1.36	.26	11.4	5	24
Posttest	5	18.12	1.19	.21			.07
Pretest	1	13.77	1.39	.25	1.69		
Posttest	5	14.25	2	.31			
t	Control						

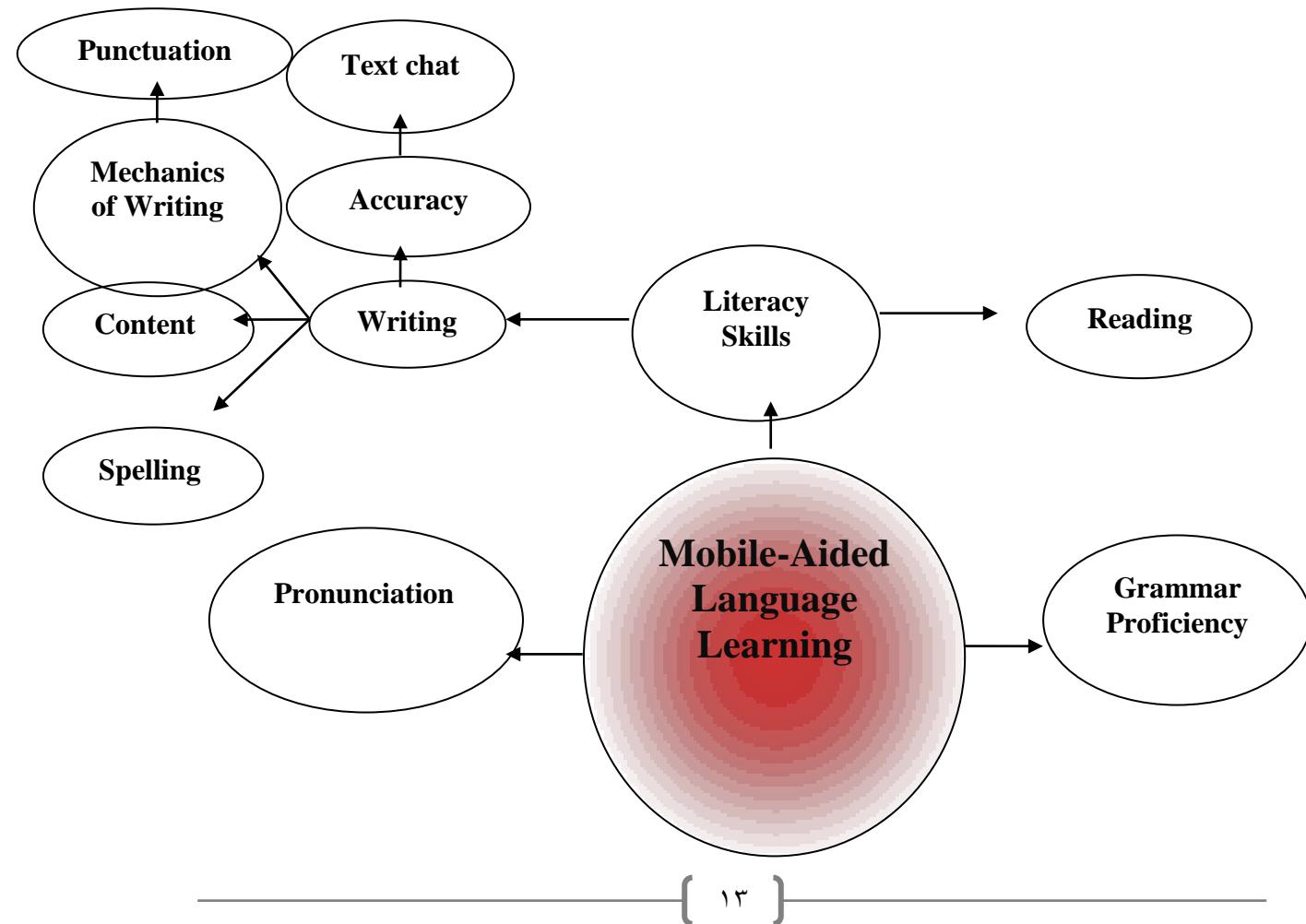
Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test analysis of writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation test held as a posttest. It is clear from table 3 that the mean score of the experimental group (18.12) is higher than the control group (14.25). Also, the independent sample t-test indicated that the experimental group performed significantly higher than the control group on the writing accuracy, speaking fluency, grammar, and pronunciation test ($t = 5.53$, $df = 49$, $p < .05$). This means that tablet-aided language learning helped the experimental group write accurately, speak fluently, grammar proficiency,

and pronounce English words correctly significantly. In other words, the experimental group students performed better than the control group using the tablet. Therefore, the hypothesis that claims there are not any significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group taught using the tablet-aided method and the control group taught using traditional methods were rejected.

Table 3: Means and Standard Deviation of Both Groups in writing, reading, grammar, and pronunciation in the Posttest

Posttest	Group	N	Mea	Std.	Standar	T	Df	P
			n	Deviation	d error			
t	Experimental	15	18.12	1.19	.21	5.5	49	.00
	Control	15	14.25	2	.31			

Figure 1: The Hyper Use of Mobile in Education



Conclusion

Mobile-aided language learning now is the goal of learners and teachers, especially with the digital life surroundings. All parts of life, to some extent, turned into digital ones. Clever boards, clever refrigerators, cars with the electronic brains, using robots in-home services, etc., are examples of the effect of technology on our life. Education is the most important part of our life and should be noticed and developed every time. Because, we can, for example, make use of an old car and traditional television, but cannot learn and teach traditionally without using any kind of technology. Teachers' job is not an easy task. It is one of the most difficult and dangerous tasks in the entire world. Teachers deal directly with the learners' minds. In this case, teachers should be aware of using suitable methods and approaches to convey academic information and knowledge. Hence, mobile is one of the most effective and preferred channels of learning and teaching. Mobiles are not using for social purposes only, but also for academic too.

Mobiles, without a doubt, contributed to a modernized education. Most students spare fertilizing mobile phone applications in English classrooms. Mobile devices are very applicable, small, stylish, handy, and easy to use. Mobile technology has notably contributed to the field of learning. Mobile-aided language learning enables students to improve their literacy skills and to identify their abilities. It can be used to enhance both independent and collaborative learning experiences. Mobile Aided language learning enables the students to develop their literacy and to identify the weak spots in their educational process. It supports independent and co-operative learning experiences. It also helps learners to work upon their hard spots and improve their weak skills.

The benefits of mobile phones are not restricted to increased access to e-learning educational services only, but also to cover and support learning outside and inside classrooms. It gives learners a wide range of locations and periodical freedom. Its mobility permits learners to learn with relaxing atmospheres. They can do and review their how to work in bus, car, train, while working and walking, in internet café. More obviously, they can listen to their recorded lectures while fishing, running, making a cake, and shopping. This one of the most benefits of using mobile applications and

devices to develop teaching and learning. Mobiles can also contribute to making changes like learning modalities that in turn impact educational outcomes. Mobiles represent not only new methods of teaching and learning but facilitate different learning processes and instructional methods that the theories of new learning identify as efficient and useful for both learning and teaching processes.

Undoubtedly, relevant academic use of mobile in classrooms may bring awareness among the learners and convert the learning process. Using mobile in teaching and learning can converts what is very difficult into easy and comprehensible. Mobile devices are more affordable for people nowadays. The functions of mobile devices are not only used for communication purposes, but also entertainment, social networks, business, and education. Despite the increasing use of mobile in our daily life, but unfortunately its adaptation into teaching and learning still near to the ground.

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