

**МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ
ДОНЕЦЬКИЙ НАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ**

**АКТУАЛЬНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ ВИКЛАДАННЯ
ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ У ВИЩІЙ ШКОЛІ**

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MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Анотація. Метою даної статті є проаналізувати сильні й слабкі сторони використання мобільних технологій у процесі навчання іноземних мов, розглянути деякі форми їх використання та визначити певні труднощі, з якими цей підхід може зіткнутися в українських реаліях.

Ключові слова: *мобільні технології, вивчення мови за допомогою мобільних технологій, e-learning, автономність учня, бездротова комунікація.*

Анотация. Целью данной статьи является проанализировать достоинства и недостатки использования мобильных технологий в процессе обучения иностранным языкам, рассмотреть некоторые формы их использования и обозначить определенные трудности, с которыми данный подход может столкнуться в украинских реалиях.

Ключевые слова: *мобильные технологии, изучение языков с помощью мобильных технологий, e-learning, автономность учащегося, беспроводная коммуникация.*

Summary. The main aim of this paper is to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of using mobile technologies in language teaching, consider some applications of m-learning and outline certain challenges mobile-assisted language learning might face in Ukrainian realities.

Key words: *mobile technologies, mobile-assisted language learning, e-learning, learner autonomy, wireless communication.*

Introduction. Over the last two decades, the concepts of learner autonomy and independence have gained enormous popularity within the context of language learning. This learner-centered, focused approach to learning enables a learner to determine the learning objectives, define the content and progression of learning, and select methods and techniques to be used. As a result, autonomous learners are supposed to be flexible, persistent and responsible, creative, independent and self-sufficient, curious, open and motivated. In fact, learner autonomy should be an ultimate goal of all parts of education because it provides learners with an opportunity to continue their learning independently. Having this noble aim in mind, educators are falling over themselves searching for new ways to realize it. In this regard a technology-based approach can be considered as one of the most powerful ways to foster autonomy and provide students with an opportunity to become

independent users rather than traditional classroom learners. The idea itself of course is not fresh since the myriad of online resources, network services, and educational software together provide enormous background for self-directed learning and computer-assisted language learning has been incorporated in almost every school and university curriculum. E-learning is widely used as a technological platform to access various audio and video materials, conduct assessment, share necessary materials, etc. However, nowadays not only technology is getting mobile, it is also true in relation to people. Consequently, modern requirements to the learning process are its dynamics and mobility, which e-learning unfortunately fails to deliver. In this respect more and more educators turn to such devices as mobile phones, tablet computers, PDAs, etc. which affordances are even more unique compared to regular e-learning. So, widespread access to these relatively inexpensive and sophisticated devices is changing the landscape of e-learning in many ways and we are observing a shift from already widespread computer assisted language learning to mobile assisted one.

Review of literature. Undoubtedly, modern scientists and practitioners realize that it is impossible to ignore modern technological developments and nowadays it is a must not only to keep track of them but also conduct researches and develop approaches to use the opportunities these technologies provide for the educational purposes.

Since m-learning for language learning (or MALL - Mobile-assisted Language Learning) is a relatively new field within CALL and e-learning, there is still little reliable research available. In scientific literature MALL is defined as “any type of language learning using portable devices, such as mobile phones, MP3/MP4 players, PDAs, tablet computers, portable radios and DVD players, and electronic dictionaries” [6:14]. However, even the term 'MALL' itself has come under scrutiny, with alternatives such as MALU (Mobile-assisted Language Use) being proposed as a more accurate reflection of how mobile devices can be used for learning [4:7]. Deep and thorough analysis is also challenging to be made because mobile devices are evolving so quickly. What may be the latest mobile technology at the start of a three-

year mobile learning project may start to seem very limited by the end. Nevertheless, much as it is rather complicated nowadays, numerous research studies are carried out in this developing field. Thus, G. Stockwell in his work *Investigating Learner Preparedness for and Usage Patterns of Mobile Learning* cares about the psychological perspective of applying mobile technologies in the educational process [8:262]. N. Pachler in his turn pays more attention to the digital literacy stating it as the main prerequisite for the effective learning process [7: 8]. The researches of J. Dias, A. Kukulska-Hulme, T. Yamaguchi, M. Salaberry, B. Green, K. Collier, N. Evans and others [2; 6; 10; 3; 4; 5;] are devoted to practical mastering certain language competences via mobile technologies. It is worth mentioning, that not only foreign scholars investigate the field of mobile technologies, as in the European countries and the USA people cannot imagine their lives without using smartphones and table computers, but also Russian scientists actively work in this direction. Y. Grigorian, for instance, published his research in which he proved the effectiveness of m-learning to ensure learner's autonomy [1: 26].

Objectives. Although such a relatively new field of research as MALL in general suffers from a lack of a single unifying theoretical framework, it is widely recognized as a powerful tool to motivate learners and ensure their autonomy which is impossible to ignore. The main aim of this paper is to observe the opportunities mobile technologies provide in ESL by considering some applications of it as well as outline certain challenges this approach might come across in Ukrainian realities.

Content. Mobile technologies are extensively spreading all over the world and have already become an important part of our routine life. These days mobile devices such as PDAs, phones, and other handheld devices, are used everywhere for doing everything ranging from voice calling, texting, video chat, listening to audio to web surfing, shopping, etc. This ubiquitous nature of mobile technology allows educators to take advantage of it in the learning environment. Among the most notable advantages of mobile gadgets is access to learning anytime at any place. Compared to classroom or e-learning, the user does not need to be sitting in a classroom or at a computer to access learning materials. This enables users to brush up on language

skills just before or just after a conversation in the language they are learning. Handheld delivery also affords new dynamics for collaborative learning as users can share the language learning process in small synchronous groups. E. Klopfer states the following properties of mobile devices, which allow their users to be engaged in learning process more freely:

- portability: such devices can be taken to different places due to small size and weight;

- social interactivity: exchanging data and collaboration with other learners is possible through mobile devices;

- context sensitivity: the data on mobile devices can be gathered and responded uniquely to the current location and time;

- connectivity: mobile devices can be connected to other devices, data collection devices, or a common network by creating a shared network;

- individuality: activities platform can be customized for individual learner [5:38].

Moreover, according to recent studies and global reports on the spread of mobile technology, 90% of people of our planet are now covered by mobile network and that by 2011, 85% mobiles shipped worldwide have an Internet browser on them. Not only that. It is expected that by 2015 mobile Web browsing will exceed desktop Web browsing [3:74]. In order to meet the needs and wants of the new generation, which is highly geared towards this evolving new technology, educators and language teachers have no choice but to adapt themselves to the modes of MALL in both teaching and developing of educational materials.

In terms of the Internet usage such concept as Web 2.0 technology may be considered. Web 2.0 is commonly associated with web applications which facilitate interactive information sharing, user-centered design and collaboration in the World Wide Web. Content is created and shared by the users. Web 2.0 technology has free or low cost access and promotes socializing without time and place limitation. Common examples of Web 2.0 are blogs, wikis, and social-networking web-sites such as Facebook or Twitter. They allow users to interact with others or collaborate

with others “anywhere and anytime” if they have internet access. Pedagogically, they promote interaction and collaboration by allowing users to give and receive comments. Furthermore, they have the potential of reaching readers beyond classmates because anyone around the world can read a learner’s postings. Moreover, blogs can be used as online personal journals and electronic portfolios. They can be used as a new assessment tool in the classroom. Because by their nature, blogs keep recorded postings by learners, and teachers can check how much the postings have improved in terms of content and grammar. In addition, students feel responsibility for their writing because they are writing for real audiences [10: 59]. So, learners might be more careful in terms of selecting formal grammar or writing styles in their postings. Using PDAs, iPhones or handheld small laptops (or netbooks or tablet PCs), learners can have easy access to their blogs and check other people’s feedback whenever they want. For example, when learners go on a trip or visit a target language country, they- can leave messages or thoughts in their blogs and other classmates; even public audiences can give them feedback on their content as well as their writing style and/or grammar. Finally, learners can use their blogs as book reviews or writing portfolios in a writing class. The above examples describe traditional reading-writing based blog use, but there are other forms of blogging such as Audioblogging, Moblogging, Vlogging, and synchronous blogging, (i.e., Twitter).

Since these technologies offer the opportunity for learners to get input, interaction and feedback from live native speakers, these technologies can increase the authenticity of language use and the interlocutors themselves. Indeed, these technologies are an excellent means of providing authenticity because interaction via such small devices, and the multimodality (reading, writing, speaking and listening) they offer, are exactly how native speakers interact with each other. In addition, since many learners can have unlimited access to Web 2.0 technologies via their handheld devices, they may feel more comfortable than in a traditional classroom environment. And, with greater comfort and the opportunity to pursue their own goals for language learning, greater autonomy will likely increase these learners’ motivation and investment in the language acquisition process.

Another powerful tool which is offered uniquely by mobile devices is unlimited number of mobile applications (apps) now available through leading mobile platforms such as Apple (iOS), Google (Android). A learner of English, whose device supports any of these operation systems, can visit App Store or Google play market and download language app lications in seconds. Such apps provide vocabulary databases, pronunciation guides, subtitled videos, podcasts, word cards, and a wide range of audio-visual and other tools to enhance learning. Language tutorial videos, flashcards, online dictionaries and other such materials have made vocabulary building easier, more effective and hassle-free. The fact that the majority of these apps work off-line and are absolutely free is of course seen as an indisputable advantage. Moreover, responsive touch screens, enhanced text entry, high-quality image, audio and video recording, editing, and sharing, voice recognition, storage, connectivity, and GPS all bring together the multi-sensory experience that makes for effective language acquisition.

The mix of different media and the varied ways in which information can be presented makes using apps for language learning much more appealing than traditional textbooks or the activities that used to be carried out in the language laboratories that could be found in schools and universities with old-fashioned video and audio recordings, newspapers, dictionaries and other resources. What is more, learners are not «exposed» to others if they make a mistake so they feel more comfortable trying tasks as many times as they like until they get them right. The game-like features that make using apps fun and the fact that learners do not need to spend hours in a formal setting also help. Learners can download language learning podcasts or videos onto their smartphones to listen to at their leisure. Such media (often accompanied by transcripts and comprehension exercises) can be downloaded directly from websites such as www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish and can be accessed through apps such as the British Council's LearnEnglish Podcasts. In class, learners could listen to podcasts and complete corresponding activities, after which they could consolidate their learning by downloading the podcast to listen to again in their own time. Alternatively, learners could be set the task of listening to the

podcast and completing comprehension exercises before the lesson, and come to the class prepared to discuss it. Apps such as the British Council's LearnEnglish Grammar and websites such as OUP's <http://elt.oup.com/student/headway> are available for learners to access from their phones in their own time or in class (as an alternative to using a worksheet). There are also free dictionary apps, such as the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, which can be downloaded to smartphones and used offline. In addition to being more portable than paper dictionaries, these digital dictionaries include perks such as the audio of a word, and "add to favourites" and voice search facilities. Other useful vocabulary-building tools are multi-sensory flashcard-based vocabulary learning apps such as the British Council's My Word Book. Such an application could be introduced in class alongside other vocabulary-learning strategies (such as paper-based alphabetical vocabulary notebooks), and learners can be set the task of recording and learning five words using two different methods and then discussing in small groups which method they found to be most successful and why. Such apps as Duolingo and Busuu are gaining popularity among learners. Duolingo is a completely free service which makes extensive use of the gamification elements that apps afford and offers a very comprehensive language learning system. Activities are varied and include translation, writing, reading, listening and recording, which help the user develop several skills in a fun way. They are presented as short learning chunks which learners can take in a few minutes of spare time. Busuu in its turn makes foreign students understand colloquialisms and phrases used by native English speakers. This app uses rewards, achievements and trivia to put the spark back into learning. It offers a social feature that allows the student to interact with native speakers online.

However, notwithstanding its benefits, MALL also poses related challenges. In terms of technological constraints, the most notable among others are reduced screen sizes, limited audiovisual quality, virtual keyboarding and one-finger data entry, etc. Connection problems are also a concern: web-based language learners might choose to limit their online connection times, or they may not have access at all. Other potential drawbacks include content of mobile applications which require thorough

analysis. Unfortunately, nowadays the majority of them are characterized by one-sided approach to language learning focusing only on either learning vocabulary (often random and disordered vocabulary items) or grammar. There is also a significant paucity of cultural context, and potentially limited social interaction. While mobile technologies are advancing, their output is quickly moving from verbal to visual, which is also a clear disadvantage for language learning.

When it comes to incorporating MALL into a curriculum, such crucial factors as technological competence and linguistic competence must be taken into consideration. Tasks which are not suitable for these two competences may cause too much frustration among learners and thus create a negative impact. In addition, learners' expectations and preferred learning styles also need to be considered. There are learners who do not like using mobile devices to learn. Some of them may change their opinions after learner training, but some may not. Teachers have to know their students' preferences in order to minimize any negative influence. Undoubtedly, technology nowadays has generated many opportunities and learning has become more flexible with mobile technology, but the biggest concern in this respect is whether using the mobile technology is really beneficial and effective or just new and fascinating. There are a lot of questions which need to be researched before implementing MALL into a curriculum otherwise the quality of technology use can be questionable, because some teachers may use technology only for the sake of using technology. The most problematic areas include whether a smart phone activity is better than other activities, whether all the time students spend on mobile device activities is worthwhile. This issue may also come down to the question of how to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of MALL, if it increases learners' motivation and how MALL's value changes in different learning contexts. Over their lifetimes, learners are likely to participate in episodes of formal and informal learning. Consequently, those who design curricula for formal learning need to be aware of how their teaching or guiding role fits into a broader picture of informal and out-of-class learning activities. In order to promote positive outcomes of MALL, more research on its effectiveness and more teacher training should be conducted. It is

obvious that teachers cannot fully master MALL unless they know why and how to do so.

Conclusion. Nowadays providing more convenient environment for people to learn languages is one of the strategic educational goals towards improving students' achievement and supporting differentiation of learning needs. There are many researches and developments towards the use of wireless technology for different aspects of language learning. Recent studies show that m-learning is not just another type of learning technology. It is rather a new era that is expected to re-conceptualize how people learn. Language learning is one of the disciplines that are witnessing promising evidence of the viability and great usefulness of the new mode of learning. The challenge, however, is how to best utilize this unbelievably fast growing technology within the framework of the well-established methodologies based on current learning theories in order to avoid offering learning experiences to our learners that are merely technology-based. Another challenge is also to consider unique learning and teaching solutions for unique educational and cultural contexts and to resolve the threats felt by some educators as well as learners and consequently their resistance to this new type of learning.

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(Донецьк)

УСУНЕННЯ ТРУДНОЩІВ СПІЛКУВАННЯ НА ЗАНЯТТІ З ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

Анотація. Розглянуто типи труднощів у спілкуванні іноземною мовою та причини їх виникнення. Запропоновано шляхи подолання труднощів у спілкуванні та умови мотивації до нього.

Ключові слова: *трудність, мовний бар'єр, лінгвістичний бар'єр, пізнавальна мотивація, мовна поведінка.*

Аннотация. Рассмотрены типы сложностей в общении на иностранном языке и причины их возникновения. Предложены пути преодоления сложностей в общении и условия мотивации к нему.

Ключевые слова: *трудность, языковой барьер, лингвистический барьер, познавательная мотивация, речевое поведение.*

Summary. The types of difficulties in communication in a foreign language and their causes are considered. Ways of overcoming difficulties in communication and conditions of motivation to it are suggested.

Keywords: *difficulty, language barrier, linguistic barrier, cognitive motivation, speech behavior.*