

The Impact of Using Mobile Phone Application on EFL Students' Writing Proficiency

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Abstract: *The increasing integration of mobile applications into language education has significantly impacted English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, particularly writing proficiency. This study examines how mobile applications influence the development of essential writing skills, including spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and composition, among EFL students. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing pre- and post-tests alongside structured surveys to assess the writing performance of 200 intermediate-level students enrolled in English language courses in Hail, Saudi Arabia. Findings indicate substantial improvements across all writing components, with notable gains in spelling accuracy, grammatical competence, vocabulary retention, and overall composition structure. However, challenges such as over-reliance on digital tools, reduced critical thinking in writing, and distractions from mobile usage were also identified. The study recommends a balanced instructional approach that integrates mobile applications with traditional teaching strategies, fosters guided digital engagement and ensures equitable access to technology.*

Keywords: mobile applications, writing proficiency, EFL learning, student engagement, technology in education

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has witnessed rapid technological advancements that have transformed educational practices, particularly in language learning. Mobile applications have emerged as integral tools for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, offering students interactive, accessible, and personalized learning experiences. Writing proficiency, a critical skill in language acquisition, has been significantly influenced by these digital tools, which assist in spelling correction, grammar refinement, vocabulary expansion, and structured composition.

Research Problem

While mobile applications offer substantial benefits for EFL learners, concerns arise regarding students' dependency on digital tools, particularly autocorrect and predictive text, which may hinder the development of independent writing skills. Many students struggle with structuring their thoughts coherently without technological assistance, leading to potential weaknesses in grammar, composition, and vocabulary retention. Additionally, excessive engagement with mobile devices can result in distractions, reducing focus and productivity in writing tasks.

Research Question

This study aims to answer the following research question:

How do mobile phone applications influence the writing proficiency of EFL students, particularly in their engagement with fundamental writing skills such as spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and composition?

Significance of the Study

This research is significant for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers seeking to optimize digital tools in language education. By identifying the benefits and drawbacks of mobile-assisted writing, the study provides insights into effective pedagogical strategies that balance technological and traditional learning approaches.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mobile Applications and Writing Proficiency

Influence on Spelling and Grammar Accuracy

Applications such as Grammarly and Microsoft Word offer automated spelling and grammar checks, helping students refine their accuracy (Marzuki et al., 2023). Studies indicate that such tools reduce students' hesitation in writing tasks and foster confidence in grammar usage (Siddique & Nair, 2015). However, research also suggests that over-reliance on these applications may weaken students' ability to detect and correct errors independently (Kacatl & Klimova, 2019).

Vocabulary Acquisition and Usage

Vocabulary-building applications such as Duolingo, Quizlet, and Memrise engage students through gamified learning, reinforcing retention and contextual application (Gou, 2023). Collaborative tools like WhatsApp and Telegram facilitate vocabulary expansion through peer interaction and real-time corrections (Kacatl & Klimova, 2019).

Composition Skills and Writing Coherence

Digital tools play a crucial role in improving students' ability to structure essays and express ideas coherently. Applications like Evernote and Scrivener support organization, while Google Docs enables collaborative writing, enhancing composition quality (Mauricio & Genuino, 2020).

Challenges of Mobile Learning in Writing Development

Despite their advantages, mobile applications pose challenges such as reduced critical thinking, distractions, and excessive reliance on digital assistance. Studies indicate that constant exposure to autocorrect features may impair students' ability to recall correct spelling and grammatical structures (Mukhdoomi et al., 2020). Furthermore, mobile distractions, including social media notifications, negatively affect students' writing focus and productivity (Siddique & Nair, 2015).

Previous Studies

Recent studies highlight the impact of mobile applications on writing proficiency and student motivation. Sari and Suwandi (2024) conducted a quasi-experimental study that demonstrated significant increases in both writing proficiency and motivation among students utilizing mobile apps. Similarly, Hussain and Memon (2023) provided qualitative insights indicating improvements in writing skills attributed to the interactive nature of these applications. Khan and Ali (2022) employed a mixed-methods approach, revealing notable enhancements in writing skills among students using mobile apps compared to those receiving traditional instruction. However, Martinez (2022) cautioned that some students prioritizing speed over depth in their writing while using mobile applications produced lower-quality work. Furthermore, Thompson and Renshaw (2021) found that distractions from notifications and multitasking negatively affected writing quality. In contrast, Alshahrani and Alharthi (2021) conducted a meta-analysis confirming the generally positive influence of mobile applications on writing performance. Lastly, Lee and Kim (2020) offered qualitative insights into the drawbacks of over-reliance on mobile technology, suggesting it may hinder the development of writing skills. Together, these studies present a nuanced view of the benefits and challenges associated with mobile applications in writing education.

The above-mentioned recent studies indicate that mobile applications significantly influence EFL students' writing proficiency. While these tools enhance engagement and various writing skills, concerns about over-reliance on technology persist. Recommendations suggest integrating mobile applications into EFL curricula while balancing traditional writing practices. Further research is needed to explore long-term effects and effective strategies for combining mobile technology with traditional methods.

The current study aims to explore the impact of mobile applications on EFL students' writing proficiency, focusing specifically on spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and composition skills. Unlike previous studies, this research delves into the nuances of how these tools influence each skill individually. It addresses the gap in understanding students' engagement levels with

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 foundational writing skills and seeks to identify effective instructional practices that balance mobile applications with traditional instruction.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Participants

A quantitative research design was adopted, utilizing pre- and post-tests to evaluate writing proficiency across four key areas: spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and composition. Additionally, structured surveys measured students’ engagement levels and attitudes toward mobile applications. The study involved 200 intermediate-level EFL students from English language institutions in Hail, Saudi Arabia.

Data Collection Instruments

- Pre- and post-tests assessing students’ writing proficiency.
- Structured surveys examining student perceptions of mobile-assisted writing.

Data Analysis

A paired t-test was conducted to analyze pre-test and post-test differences, ensuring statistical validity.

RESULTS

The following table summarizes the pre-test and post-test performance across writing components:

Table (1-4) results of pre and post written test

Score Range	Spelling (Pre)	Spelling (Post)	Grammar (Pre)	Grammar (Post)	Vocabulary (Pre)	Vocabulary (Post)	Composition (Pre)	Composition (Post)
High (80_100%)	18	126	19	89	21	87	8	81
Medium (50 – 79%)	88	54	90	57	91	61	90	67
Low (0-49)	49	20	91	54	88	52	102	52

The results reveal a significant positive impact of the mobile application on student writing proficiency. However, potential negative implications include:

- Over-Reliance on Technology: Risk of diminishing engagement with traditional learning materials.
- Distraction Risks: Possible distractions from educational tasks.
- Limited Social Interaction: Reduced face-to-face interactions among peers.
- Equity Concerns: Disparities in access to devices and internet connectivity.

DISCUSSION

The study confirms previous findings that mobile applications enhance spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and composition skills among EFL students. However, concerns regarding over-reliance on digital tools and distractions remain valid. The findings support Marzuki et al. (2023) and Kacetl & Klimova (2019) in highlighting the necessity of combining mobile learning with traditional instructional strategies to prevent skill deterioration.

Recommendations

- **Balanced Pedagogy:** Integrate mobile applications as supplementary tools while maintaining traditional writing exercises.
- **Regulated Usage:** Establish classroom guidelines to minimize distractions and promote responsible mobile use.
- **Collaborative Learning:** Encourage peer-based activities using mobile tools to reinforce engagement.
- **Teacher Training:** Equip educators with strategies to maximize the benefits of digital tools while mitigating drawbacks.
- **Accessibility Policies:** Ensure equal access to technology for all students to prevent disparities in learning opportunities.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the transformative impact of mobile applications on EFL students' writing proficiency. While substantial improvements were observed across spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and composition, the study also underscores challenges related to over-reliance and distractions. Future research should explore long-term effects, different mobile applications' effectiveness, and strategies for integrating digital tools with conventional writing instruction.

Limitations

- **Sample Limitation:** The study was conducted in a single region, which may affect generalizability.
- **Short Study Duration:** Long-term impacts of mobile learning were not assessed.
- **Lack of Qualitative Insights:** Future studies should incorporate qualitative interviews for a deeper understanding of student experiences.

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