MOBILE APPS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH AS A MEANS OF ORGANIZING INDEPENDENT WORK OF STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the problematic aspects of utilizing information and communication technologies in the process of teaching a foreign language. The authors strive to shed some light on the concept of mobile learning and considers its advantages in teaching foreign languages. The article provides a brief overview of mobile applications for teaching English and the experience of using them in the independent work of students.

Keywords: information and communication technologies; mobile learning; training mobile applications; independent work of students.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language competency is now becoming one of the basic components of grooming well-rounded specialists in various fields. In this regard, the role of a foreign language in training specialists in higher education institutions is growing significantly, whereby the foreign language course bears communicative, pragmatic, and professional features. Currently, educational institutions encountering the task of not only modernizing the content of schooling but also introducing new technologies for the formation of communicative foreign language competency of future specialists. Analysis of the latest research in the field of innovations in foreign language teaching has shown that one of the most relevant areas is the introduction of modern information and communication technologies into the educational process, in particular technologies related to mobile learning, which ensure the optimization of the educational process, accessibility, and effectiveness of training, integration of students into the information society. This is reflected, in particular, in the gradual introduction of mobile phone applications based on various platforms: Android, iOS, and so on. The use of tablet computers, smartphones, mobile phones, iPads, iPhones, and other technological innovations for educational purposes has led to the formation of a new direction within the concept of e-learning (e-Learning – Electronic learning)-mobile foreign language learning (M – Learning-Mobile learning). Many scientists and teachers believe that the future of education with the support of information and computer technologies is closely connected with the spread of mobile

communications, the emergence of a large number of educational applications and programs, new technologies that expand the opportunities and quality of education.

METHODOLOGY

Mobile learning today is a new, developing direction in education, the distinctive feature of which is the creation of a new learning environment. Due to the prevalence of mobile technologies and the constant growth of the functionality of mobile devices, UNESCO experts in the field of education suggest using their potential to improve the quality and accessibility of education, as well as to build an individual learning trajectory [8]. The theory and practice of using mobile devices and mobile educational resources are actively discussed at scientific conferences and forums. Since 2002, several conferences and seminars have been held annually in Europe and the United States to discuss the use of mobile educational technologies or resources. Since 2002, the international conference "MLearnCon" has been held on the problems of integrating mobile technologies into training, creating, and using mobile learning content [4]. The international conference on mobile learning (held since 2005) is a platform for discussing the results of research in the field of mobile learning and achievements in this field [6]. The results of the project “Mobile Technologies in Life-long Learning: best practices of interest”. Within the framework of this project, research is being conducted on the impact of mobile technologies on improving access to education, regardless of social and economic status, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, or physical disabilities [6]. In Europe and the United States, there are periodicals devoted to the problems of mobile learning, in particular, the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning (since 2009) and the International Journal of Mobile Learning and organization (since 2007). There are some major foreign projects aimed at creating a new virtual learning environment using mobile technologies.

In general, most domestic and foreign researchers, in particular U. Khaydarova[7], D. Usarova [2], D. Zoyirova [1], N. Ruzibayeva [5], O. Ametova [3] conclude that the uniqueness of mobile learning in comparison with traditional teaching methods and modern methods such as e-learning and mixed learning is that students are primarily not tied to a specific time and place, having access to educational material always, at any convenient time. Thus, the main difference between mobile learning is two points:

- the informal nature of training, which increases the proportion of independent work of students, in essence, managed or controlled self-learning;
- a constant learning process, blurring the boundaries between academic activities and extracurricular time, working in the classroom and beyond.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Mobile devices are successfully used in the study of various academic subjects, and a foreign language is no exception. The expediency of using mobile devices in the process of learning a foreign language and learning a language is not in doubt, based on the fact that the modern generation of students, especially teenagers and young people, perceive mobile devices with their attractive interface, interactivity, and customized approach to user needs as an integral part of their lives. Currently, users of mobile devices have access to a huge number of applications for learning foreign languages, especially English. In our opinion, training in the use of applications for mobile electronic devices is particularly relevant at the moment. Currently, students, with all their education in the field of digital technologies, do not seem to be sufficiently oriented to the market of services offered. The task of the teacher is to help students choose the necessary and appropriate products that can contribute to language learning as much as possible, thereby individualizing the learning process.

Today, there are mobile applications and programs focused on various aspects of teaching a foreign language. The study of scientific literature, the market for mobile applications of foreign languages, as well as the systematization of the experience of using applications for learning a foreign language showed that they can be divided into the following main groups:

1) mobile applications aimed primarily at improving a particular speech skill;
2) mobile apps designed to develop language skills, such as lexical or grammatical skills;
3) universal mobile applications designed for the comprehensive development of foreign language communicative competence.

Of course, this division is very conditional, since most applications are not limited to working on one of the types of speech activity or a specific skill. For example, applications where learning to listen is the dominant goal, in one way or another, combine the perception of oral speech by ear with learning to read, speak, and develop lexical skills. From the viewpoint of practical application in the process of teaching a foreign language, specialized mobile applications are compelling for us as a means of optimizing and intensifying the educational process, as well as a resource base for developing educational materials on the discipline "English". From our point of view, the practical application of mobile applications has a huge potential, but at the same time, the integration of working with applications into the structure of practical training presents certain problems and can be used quite limited. At the same time, the introduction of interactive technologies in the learning process to organize and

intensify the independent work of students (mainly extracurricular) seems to us a very promising direction. Therefore, mobile applications can be used quite effectively to develop *listening skills*, since modern mobile devices offer rich technical capabilities for viewing videos, listening to audio fragments, recording speech fragments, and videos. Developers present programs for those who want to improve their pronunciation skills, recognize sounds by ear and correlate the sound and visual image of a word. The most successful products are Sounds Right (British Council), as well as the sounds app: Pronunciation App (Macmillan Education), these applications include interactive phonetic tables for the British and American versions of English, exercises, game tasks, and tests. From the point of view of developing the skills of perception and understanding of speech by ear, BBC applications are extremely valuable, using which students can get access to authentic audio, video and text materials, for example, Learning English for BBC, 6 Minute British English. These applications can also be used for the development of other linguistic and linguistic-cultural competencies since they include specialized sections dedicated to the study of vocabulary, grammar, development of communication skills, and speaking skills. The free apps developed as part of the British Council's training programs-Learn English Audio & Video, Learn English Great Videos, and Learn English Elementary Podcasts – feature the best podcasts and videos designed for learning English. Applications are provided with several additional features, such as interactive texts of audio recordings, interactive glossaries of keywords, exercises for understanding each part of the information material. They contain materials of various levels of complexity that allow you to improve your speech perception skills by ear, as well as replenish your vocabulary. Mobile applications Two Minute English, Real English, Puzzle English, built on learning speech perception by ear, are also of considerable interest to English teachers and students because they contain a huge number of resources and tasks for working on this very popular and often insufficiently developed speech skill among students. In general, all these applications have a high motivational potential due to the wide variety of topics and forms, so they can be used for independent work of students. Next, we will look at some applications designed for the formation and development of *grammatical skills* that can be used both for classroom work and for independent work of students. Among the mobile applications designed to work on the development of grammatical skills, we should first of all name the Learn English Grammar (British Council) application. It contains grammar exercises of four levels. Training tasks use 10 types of exercises, such as filling in blanks, multiple-choice, and matching questions and answers. It should be noted that the Learn English Grammar app is ranked first in the iTunes Education category in 9 countries, and is also in the top ten

in more than 40 countries. Another application of the British Council Johnny Grammar's Word Challenge is a quiz for English language learners, which will help to check not only the general level of grammar but also spelling and vocabulary used in everyday English. Tests are divided into categories (Words, Grammar, Spelling) within three levels of difficulty. The free app for the MyGrammarLab course published by Pearson contains mobile interactive exercises of various levels. The app allows the user to choose topics and questions that interest them and create their collections of exercises and tests. This course is suitable both for self-study and for use as part of group classes in the English language course. Another convenient app for checking your knowledge of English grammar is the English Grammar Test. The app contains 60 tests, each of which is dedicated to a separate grammatical topic. After completing the test, the app provides a list of correct and incorrect answers, as well as a simple and understandable explanation of errors. Next, we would like to focus on applications that are designed to develop *lexical skills* and expand the vocabulary of students. Many of these electronic applications are designed for self-study of foreign languages and are built on a game basis. The MyWordBook app, available on the British Council website, is designed as an interactive notebook for English language learners. Vocabulary in the app is presented in the form of sets of interactive flashcards, organized in any order, and the form of thematic groups, distributed by difficulty levels. Each flashcard is provided with a definition and usage example from the Cambridge University Press dictionary, a translation, fields for notes, an audio sample, and an image. The "Practice " category contains five types of tasks, after which the user can move a word to the list of learned vocabulary. Other popular applications for users that are designed to work on expanding their vocabulary through fun activities in a playful way include English with Words, Easy ten, and polyglot. English words, Memrise. These applications are characterized by an individualized approach to the user's needs, in particular, they include features such as the ability to create individual word lists, spoken words and usage contexts, an individual training schedule, various types of training tasks, interactive and game components (for example, statistics of user success, cards for repeating the material passed, a point reward system). Sections for developing lexical skills are also included in other applications that we discussed above (Johnny Grammar's Word Challenge, Learning English for BBC, Puzzle English, and many others).

CONCLUSION

In our opinion, many applications for vocabulary replenishment can be used primarily for independent work of students, for activating and developing lexical skills

within the framework of the topics studied, for self-testing. At the same time, it should be noted that not all applications have high-quality language content, various types of tasks, and do not fully use the technical capabilities that modern mobile devices have. The review allows us to conclude that to date, a significant number of mobile applications and programs for learning a foreign language have been developed, aimed at both the formation of various skills and abilities and the development of different types of speech activity. A fairly wide range and variety of existing mobile learning resources allow you to choose applications per the individual needs, interests, and level of language training of the student. Almost all the mobile applications described above can be used quite effectively for independent work.

From our point of view, the practical application of mobile applications has a huge potential to increase the efficiency of the process of learning foreign languages and can significantly improve the process of foreign language training of students, open up new aspects of it and turn it from a serious labor-intensive process into an exciting activity. Practice shows that they have a considerable advantage over traditional methods of teaching: intensification of independent activity, individualization of learning, an increase of cognitive activity, and motivation of learning. The use of mobile technologies in the learning process contributes not only to the enrichment of the educational process but also the acquisition by students of skills and abilities formation and development of which is based on traditional learning tools is quite time-consuming.

Thus, the use of mobile technologies in the educational process helps to improve the formation of foreign language skills of students, provides effective independent work, increases motivation and cognitive activity of students, interest in the subject, helps to intensify and individualize learning.

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