



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

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the actual problem of the possibilities of using information and communication technologies in the process of teaching a foreign language. The author reveals 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 their use in the independent work of students.

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

Foreign language education is now becoming one of the basic components in the structure of the competence model of specialist training. In this regard, the role of a foreign language in the training of specialists in educational institutions of higher education, in which the foreign language course is communicative-pragmatic and professionally-oriented, is significantly increasing. Currently, the higher school faces the task of not only modernization of the content of training courses, but also the introduction of new technologies for the formation of foreign-language communicative competence of future specialists.

The analysis of recent research in the field of innovations in teaching foreign languages 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, and the integration of students into the information society. This is reflected, in particular, in the gradual introduction of mobile phone applications based on various platforms into the learning process: Android, iOS, etc.

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 educators believe that the future of information and computer technology-enabled education is connected precisely with the spread of mobile communications, the emergence of a large number of educational applications and programs, and new technologies that expand the opportunities and quality of education.

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 is actively discussed at scientific conferences and forums. Since 2002, a number of 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 "The International Conference of 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]. Of interest are the results of the project "Mobile Technologies in Life-long Learning: best practices". 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, and 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 a number of major foreign projects aimed at creating a new virtual learning environment using mobile technologies.

In general, the majority of domestic and foreign researchers, in particular, J. R. R. Tolkien. Traxler [7], S. V. Titova [2], V. A. Kuklev [1], H. Jarvis [5], M. Fine [3] come to the conclusion 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 fundamental difference between mobile learning is two points:

- the informal nature of training, in which the share of independent work of students increases, in essence, guided or controlled self-learning;
- continuous learning process, blurring the boundaries between study sessions and extracurricular time, work in the classroom and beyond.

Mobile devices are successfully used in the study of various academic disciplines, 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 beyond doubt, based at least on the fact that the modern generation of students, primarily 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, it seems to us, are not sufficiently oriented in the market of the services offered. The task of the teacher is to help students choose the necessary and appropriate products that can maximize the learning of the language, 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 of 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 certain 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 of the applications are not limited to working on one of the types of speech activity or a specific skill. For example, applications in which 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 point of view of practical application in the process of teaching a foreign language, specialized mobile applications interested us as a means of optimizing and intensifying the educational process, as well as a resource base for the development of educational materials in 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 the practical lesson presents certain problems and can be used quite limited. At the same time, the introduction of interactive technologies in the learning process in order to organize and intensify the independent work of students (mainly extracurricular) seems to us a very promising direction.

Thus, mobile applications can be used quite effectively to develop listening skills, due to the fact that modern mobile devices offer rich technical capabilities for viewing videos, listening to audio fragments, recording speech fragments and video clips. The 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 include Sounds Right (British Council), and the Sounds: 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, the BBC applications are extremely valuable, using which students can access 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, the 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. The applications are equipped with a number of additional functionality, such as interactive texts of audio recordings, interactive glossaries of keywords, exercises to understand each part of the information material. They present materials of different levels of complexity that allow you to improve your listening skills, as well as replenish your vocabulary. Mobile applications Two Minute English, Real English, Puzzle English, built on learning the perception of speech by ear, are also of considerable interest to English teachers and students, because they contain a



huge amount of resources and tasks to work on these very popular and often insufficiently developed speech skills 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 a number of 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, it is necessary, first of all, to name the Learn English Grammar (British Council) application.

It presents grammar exercises of four levels. The training tasks use 10 types of exercises, such as filling in gaps, multiple choice, and matching questions and answers. It should be noted that the Learn English Grammar app is in the first place in the "Education" category of iTunes in 9 countries around the world, 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 proficiency in grammar, but also spelling and vocabulary used in everyday English. The tests are divided into categories (Words, Grammar, Spelling) within three levels of difficulty. The free My Grammar Lab course app from Pearson contains mobile interactive exercises of various levels. The app allows the user to choose topics and questions that interest them and create their own 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 handy app for testing 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 clear explanation of the 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 My Word Book app, available on the British Council website, is designed as an interactive notebook for English language learners. The vocabulary in the application is presented in the form of sets of interactive flash cards, organized both in any order, and in the form of thematic groups, distributed by difficulty levels. Each flashcard is provided with a definition and an example of



usage from the Cambridge University Press dictionary, a translation, and 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 studied vocabulary.

Among other popular applications for users, designed to work on expanding their vocabulary with the help of exciting activities in a playful way, are 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, voiced words and contexts of use, an individual training schedule, various types of training tasks, interactive and game components (for example, user success statistics, cards for repeating the material passed, a point system of encouragement).

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).

In our opinion, many applications for vocabulary replenishment can be used, first of all, for independent work of students, for activation and development of lexical skills within the framework of the studied topics, 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 are endowed with.

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 both at the formation of various skills and abilities, and at the development of different types of speech activity. A fairly wide range and variety of existing mobile learning resources allow you to choose applications in accordance with the individual needs, interests and level of language training of the student. Almost all mobile devices at the solutions 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 in improving 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 time-consuming process into an exciting activity.



Practice shows that they have a considerable advantage over traditional teaching methods: the intensification of independent activity, individualization of learning, increasing cognitive activity and motivation of learning. At the same time, the use of mobile technologies in the learning process contributes not only to the enrichment of the educational process, but also to the acquisition by students of skills and abilities, the formation and development of which on the basis of traditional learning tools is quite time-consuming.

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

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