

THE ROLE OF MOBILE PHONES AS EFFECTIVE TOOLS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING BY LIBYAN EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract: The current technological era has witnessed a great advancement in the world of mobile technology. Mobiles gadgets have now turned out to be an integral element of the daily life. Given the fact that mobile devices can be used to serve a number of functions, EFL learners can utilize them regularly to enhance their process of learning and attain good learning outcome. This article intends to explore the effectiveness of using mobile phones in language learning by Libyan EFL learners. To further investigate this issue, questionnaires were administered to 151 Libyan EFL undergraduate students from the English department of Sebha University and focus group discussions (FGDs) were carried out with 18 students. The results revealed that using mobile phones in learning was effective to a great extent. Besides, the majority of Libyan EFL learners utilized their mobile phones mostly to check meaning of words, to listen to English songs and to develop reading, listening, speaking and writing skills. The findings also demonstrated that Libyan EFL learners exhibited positive perceptions towards using mobile phones in learning English.

Keywords: Libyan EFL learners; mobile learning; mobile phones; smart phones.

INTRODUCTION

This information age and technology is distinguished by the remarkable speed of technological growth. Technology has turn out to be an essential component of our lives as well as in the learning context. In a traditional classroom, there are only communications and interactions between teachers and their students, where teacher is

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merely in charge of teaching while the students learn. However, technological gadgets and devices have grown to be so prevalent in this global villages that global-shifting changes have appeared in the manner instructors teach and students learn. 'Parallel to the growth of technologies, learning and teaching philosophies have shifted to interactional and social-based approaches for learning and teaching' (Yaman, Senel & Yesilel, 2015, p.1). Bester and Brand (2013) argue that technology cannot substitute teachers; yet, it will be utilized to support learning and teaching and can be incorporated into lectures to enhance and maximize knowledge.

Fujimoto (2012) argues that the progress in technology and science has made huge contributions to the advent of mobile technologies. The fast expansion in mobile technology have generated chances to improve learning (Al-Wasy & Mahdi, 2016). Likewise, Ahmed (2017) emphasizes that the latest advance in mobile technology, chiefly the growth of wireless network offer learners better opportunities to learn the language whenever and wherever they are. Language learning and teaching has inclined towards personalization and mobilization all over the world. Mobile devices such as mobile phones, tablets and audio players are extensively utilized in the educational environment (Chinnery, 2006; Gholami & Azarmi, 2012; Mayisela, 2013; Rahimi & Miri, 2014). As reported by Bllaca (2016), 'the use of mobile learning can be of any kind, but when it comes to language learning, mobile learning technologies such as mobile phones or smart phone is being used for various purposes' (p. 305).

Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) maintain that there has been a slow progress towards incorporating mobile technologies into learning and teaching, but more time is required by educationalists to understand how these technologies can be utilized successfully to enhance different types of learning. On the other hand, Sharples (2003) states that educationalists are concerned to develop and use the potential of technologies students carry and discover methods to place technologies into favorable usage for the advantage and benefits

of learning practice. Besides, Stockwell (2013) confirms that through the widespread of mobile technologies use, teachers have turned out to be more interested since technologies present ways of offering learning chances which students can benefit from. This widespread of mobile phone is also crucial for educators to find ways of using this new mode in education. Teaching English as a foreign language can take advantage of this technology in many ways particularly mobile phones which can be used outside the classroom where it is more suitable for the learners as it gives them more independence and time. Additionally, the immediate access to the Internet via mobile phones helps students benefit from educational materials that had not been easy to attain in the past (Ababneh, 2017). 'Mobile phones with internet connectivity can search thousands of web pages and provide details of a high degree of accuracy to the reader. They almost replace reference books and avoid the physical labor of visiting the university library.' (Nalliveetil & Alenazi 2016, p. 264). Smart phones along with other mobile learning technologies do not only give learners chances to learn in an interactive way via different platforms, but they also offer many ways and means for learners to work and study independently (Kurtz, 2012). As Yaman, Şenel, and Yeşilel, (2015) put it, 'smart phones, with their great potential to become an important device in language classrooms, can help students become autonomous learners, since they give independent access to personalized learning materials' (p.3). More essentially, smart phones are devices that can be simply used anywhere, they are easy to turn on, they are appropriate to practice listening and speaking skills. Students will also be able to get access to different apps to language where they can practice grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and other skills of language (Billaca, 2016). 'With the mobility, availability and flexibility of these devices, students can learn at any time and any place without the need for computer access and availability of learning material' (El Hariry 2015, p.299).

According to Basenese (2013) the ownership of mobile tools has increased in both developed as well as developing countries, and

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has become the highest and fastest growing technology in industry. The growing numbers of mobile phones ownership as well as the skill for offering access to contents of education anyplace and anytime, have made them a good and appealing tool for many purposes and facilities including education (Molnar & Frías-Martínez, 2011). 'Smartphone ownership is increasing day by day all over the world. Thousands of applications are available for different purposes, including language learning.' (Yaman, Şenel, & Yeşilel, 2015, p.3). In this age of technological progress, most of the undergraduate learners own the most modern mobile phones and utilize them for different functions and purposes. Taking education into account, the majority of the EFL undergraduate students rely very much on their mobile phones for online dictionaries and they hardly ever use hard copies of English dictionaries. Moreover, students find it suitable and convenient to read from the screens of transportable mobile and translate the meaning of unknown words (Nalliveettil & Alenazi 2016). In addition to that, smart phones are indispensable devices that no one can do without today. Other than being a tool of entertainment, mobile phones can also be used to do many purposes. One of these purposes is to use it in the educational context. Through mobile phones, students can perform a lot of learning tasks such as downloading their lecture notes, communicating with their classmates and teachers, browsing some educational sites and so on. Ababneh (2017) contends that mobile phones have a variety of learning benefits such as providing students with opportunities to cooperate with each other, keeping in touch with peers from different countries. They can also be applied for ultramodern options to tedious lectures, allowing learners to join in collaborative assignments. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the role of mobile phone as an effective means for learning English among Libyan EFL learners. To accomplish this aim, this study intends to answer the questions: 1) To what extent is the use of mobile phones effective for learning English by Libyan EFL learners?, 2) What are the purposes of using mobile phones by Libyan EFL learners in their

learning?, and 3) What are the perceptions of Libyan EFL learners towards using mobile phones in learning English?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mobile phones today have emerged to be influential and powerful devices in learning language as many people own mobile phones provided with services such as, multimedia message (MMS), Bluetooth and Global Systems, Wireless Internet Wi-Fi and so on. Through these great technological services, EFL learners can easily and directly get access to any types of information they need (Hismanoglu, Ersan & Colak, 2015). Enhanced by the development in technology such as the advance of wireless network and the raise of capacity in gadgets, scholars were aware that mobile technology is swiftly being employed as an educational means (Hall, 2008; Kim, Ilon & Altmann, 2013). Park (2011) maintains that in the latest years many EFL teachers and researchers have incorporated technology into second language teaching and learning environments in that mobile gadgets are becoming exceptionally omnipresent. Due to the growing popularity of mobile devices, mobile learning has received more attention and interest by language teachers and researchers. Mobile learning is distinguished by learners' abilities to get learning resources anyplace and anytime and it is assisted through the utilization of handheld mobile devices such as mobile phones, Tablets and PDAs (White & Mills, 2015). Mobile devices such as smart phones, mobile phones, tablet PCs and palmtops are generally applied in mobile learning (Kukulaska-Hulme & Traxler, 2005). With the fast progress of mobile device, mobile learning has lately grown to be a center of attention in learning (Cho, 2009; Kukulaska-Hulme, 2009). Mobile learning is any facility or service which provides learners with universal information and learning materials that helps to get knowledge (Lehner & Nosekabel, 2002). Crompton (2013) defines mobile learning as 'learning across multiple contexts, through social and content interactions, using personal electronic devices' (p.14). Mobile learning can also be defined as 'any form of learning

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that occurs by using a mobile device' (El Hariry 2015, p. 300). O'Malley et al. (2003) assert that mobile learning refers to any kinds of learning achieved by learners with the use of mobile technologies.

According to Huang, Huang, Huang and Lin (2012), mobile learning has a number of benefits for learners: being flexible, having a low cost and small size as well as being more convenient. Mobile learning also creates a learning environment as learners access announcement, teachers' comments as well as reports of grading and assignments (Kristoffersen & Ljungberg, 1998). On the contrary, there are some disadvantages of mobile learning for EFL learners which involve small size of screen, limited graphics presentation and limited lives of battery (Albers & Kim, 2001; Şad & Gökteş, 2013). As one type of mobile learning technologies, smart phones can be employed for various educational and instructional purposes outdoors and in the classroom. Instructors have maintained that mobile learning technologies are great devices that can give highly and enormous potential opportunities for learners wherever they are (Kukulskahulme & Shield, 2008). 'The swift development of mobile phones in the last decade from simple phones to smart-phones, which can serve as a mini-computer, telephone, or camera, and transfer data, has made mobile phones efficient learning tools' (Rahimi & Miri 2014, p. 1470). Furthermore, using smart phones can have great advantages particularly in acquiring vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, spelling, reading and listening skills (Chiu, Guo, Shih, Chen, Cheng & Chung, 2015).

Some researchers proposed that one technology which can be utilized to assist students to learn language is mobile phone. This technology has come up with new kind of learning called Mobile Assisted Language Learning (Thornton & Houser, 2005; Chinnery, 2006). Bezircilioğlu (2016) defines Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) as 'the integration of mobile devices into language learning process' (p.9). As stated by Hashemi and Ghasemi (2011), Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) does not only present learning chances, but also provides students with adequate opportunities for

exercises that include the major skills of language (cited in Hsu, Hwang & Chang, 2013, p. 405). Mobile learning is a useful and effective way as it contains some applications which offer a variety of learning means which students can download and aid them to control their study time more proficiently (Abadi & Saadi, 2015).

Levy and Kennedy (2005) stress that over the last ten years, scholars and researchers have tried to explore second language learning by using different mobile technologies such as mobile phones. In this respect, a number of studies around the world were undertaken to find out how mobile devices can be used to attain a good learning as they involve a wide selection of applications as well as various learning and teaching methods (El Hariry, 2015). Many scholars and researchers had looked into the efficiency and potentials of using MALL in different fields of second language learning such as vocabulary (Chen & Chung, 2008), pronunciation (Ducate & Lomicka, 2009; Saran, Seferoglu, & Cagiltay, 2009), grammar (Baleghizadeh & Oladrostam, 2010; Begum, 2011; Rueckert, Kiser, & Cho, 2012), listening (Edirisingha, Rizzi, Nie & Rothwell, 2007), speaking (Rueckert, Kiser, & Cho, 2012), reading (Huang & Lin, 2011) and writing (Morita, 2003). A study was carried out by Muhammed (2014) to find out the extent to which mobiles phones are efficient and helpful in learning among Iraqi university students. The findings revealed that a large number of the participants (99%) reported that smart phones are valuable resource for learning English and they had a huge impact on English language learning. In their study, Kennedy and Levy (2008) found that receiving text messages using English vocabulary, was a helpful and effective means for acquiring English lexis by Italian students. Thornton's and Houser's (2005) study also reported that 71% of the Japanese learners liked to get English lexis lessons via their mobile phones rather than by computer. A research done by Chen, Hsieh and Kinshuk (2008) on the influence of the use of mobile phones for learning English among Taiwanese learners, demonstrated that the learners liked using their mobile phones due to the direct access to resources and being able to

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do practice every time and anyplace. Besides, a number of students preferred the limitations of the size of the screen which make it more convenient. Bomar (2006) also asserted that using iPods in the skills of reading or listening helped learners to get the most important ideas and made them more able and ready to do discussion. Choon-Keong, Ing, and Kean-Wah (2013) who conducted a study on m-learning among Malaysian university students indicated that 60% of the learners had either a smart phone or tablet which is equipped with Wi-Fi access. Additionally, the students perceived m-learning as an effective and helpful method to manage time (86.26%), to improve students' productivity (86%), to finish their assignments more rapidly (84%) and it was beneficial for the course learning (87%). Darmi and Albion (2014) reviewed studies on the use of mobile phones for learning English in different contexts. They affirmed that incorporating mobile phones in language teaching was proved to be satisfactory for students and it had major roles in developing the skills of language and other relevant fields of language.

Chang and Hsu (2011) stressed that learners' attitudes towards using mobile phones had a fundamental role to play in determining the effectiveness of such technology for learning purposes. The majority of studies (see, e.g. Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; Fallahkhair et al., 2007; Petersen & Markiewicz, 2008; Liu, Yu, & Ran 2008; Cheng, Hwang, Wu, Shadiev, & Xie 2010; Abdous, Facer, & Yen, 2012; Oberg & Daniels, 2011; Hsu, 2012) had showed positive attitudes by learners concerning mobile technology. Beres (2011) indicated that students showed positive perceptions towards mobile learning, supporting learning beyond the classroom environment. Another study by Burston (2011) even reported total positive perceptions of learners regarding mobile learning. Ababneh (2017) examined the opinions of Jordanian students towards using mobile phones in learning English. The findings showed that students manifested positive attitudes towards using their mobile phones. In the same line, White and Mills (2014) explored the attitudes of Japanese learners concerning using smart phones in learning. It was found that the students had positive

perceptions of smart phone technology in language learning. On the other hand, some studies which were carried out by Froese, et al, (2012); Tindell and Bohlander (2012) and Elder (2013) demonstrated that smart phones had a negative impact on the students' learning process.

It should be pointed out that there is a shortage of research on the issue of mobile phones utilization for learning English in Libyan EFL classrooms settings. The current study is of great significance for both teachers and students as it sheds a light on the main role that mobile technology plays in education and how effective can be when applied appropriately in the classroom context. This study is also helpful since it has many benefits for teachers and students: first, through using technology, students can feel more interested, independent, motivated and active to learn the language. The teachers will also exploit the findings of this study in developing their teaching methods and materials as well as adopting and integrating technology in their classrooms. As a result, students' language proficiency will get better and their learning capacity will be higher. Furthermore, teachers' methods and approaches will be valuable, interesting and more advanced.

METHOD

The sample of the present study comprise 151 Libyan EFL learners studying at the College of Arts in Sebha, Libya. They have been learning English between 5-14 years. There were 138 females and 13 males aged between 18 to 27. The participants were from different semesters and they are studying various English courses at the college.

The current study applied both questionnaire and focus group discussions (FGDs). The aim of the questionnaire was to examine the efficiency of mobile phones in learning English by Libyan EFL learners as well as the purposes of using them as a learning tool. The questionnaire design was based on relevant earlier studies such as (Hismanoglu, Ersan & Colak, 2015; Darmi, 2014; Ababneh, 2017;

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Yaman, Şenel, & Yeşilel, 2015; Ahmed, 2017). The questionnaire consisted of 17 items, and it was comprised of four sections. The first section contained participants' demographic information and the second one was about the ownership and types of mobile phone. The third section focused on the effectiveness of the use of mobile phones for learning English. As for the fourth section, the emphasis was on the purposes of using mobile phone by Libyan students in learning English. The questionnaire involved four-point Likert-scale (strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree and disagree). To test the reliability of the instrument, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used. The results showed that the reliability of the questionnaire was .693 which indicate a high level of reliability. Additionally, focus group discussions (FGDs) were deployed to gather in-depth data about the Libyan EFL learners' attitudes towards the use of mobile phones for learning English. There were three focus groups, with six participants, in each group. The number of the participants in the three groups was 18. The focus group involved two parts. The first part was pertinent to the respondents' personal information. The participants' real names remained anonymous and they were given codes such as participant 1 (P1, P2, P3 etc.). The second part of the focus group was about the Libyan EFL learners' views regarding using mobile phones in learning English, and it contained 8 questions. The participants' age in the first focus group were between 19-20 and they were all females, whereas the participants' age of the second group were 21-23 and there were 1 male and 5 females. As for the third group, the participants' age ranged between 20 to 21 and there were 2 males and 4 females. All the participants in the three groups have mobile phones (smart phones).

In terms of the process of data collection methods, the following procedures were done: concerning the questionnaire, the researcher gained permission from the teachers to see the students. Afterward, the researcher met the students and notified them about the main aim of her study. Before distributing the questionnaire to the participants, they were told that the data obtained from them will be

merely used for research purposes and they will be confidential. The questionnaires were given to the students in the class and the main instructions had been clarified for them. Items, that were not clear or understandable, were translated into the participants' mother tongue to ensure that they understand what they are required to do. The researcher was around to help the students and to make things clear. Besides, the students were more welcomed to ask any questions. The participants filled in the questionnaire within 10 minutes. After collecting the data of the questionnaire, 18 students out of the total participants, who filled in the questionnaire, were selected to participate in the focus group discussions. The reason for choosing these students is that the researcher had easy access to them. After meeting the participants, the researcher explained the rationale of her study. Then, she gave them a brief idea about the nature of the questions to create a natural atmosphere for them, so that they can feel more comfortable and less anxious throughout the discussions. The participants were also informed that their responses would be recorded. All the focus group discussions were conducted in English. It is noteworthy that the students' interest and motivation to participate in the study had made the discussion flow very smoothly. Each focus group discussions lasted for an hour and they were audio recorded and transcribed.

As previously stated, the present study applied mixed method research design since both quantitative and qualitative approach were used. The data gained from the questionnaire were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, and they were displayed in the form of percentage and frequency. The responses of the focus group discussions were analyzed qualitatively.

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FINDINGS

The effectiveness of the use of mobile phones for learning English by Libyan EFL learners

Table 1 demonstrates the effectiveness of the use of mobile phones for learning English by Libyan EFL learners.

Table 1 effectiveness of utilizing mobile phones in learning English

Statement	SA	A	SD	D
Mobile phones are effective tools in learning English.	96 (63.6%)	53 (35.1%)	2 (1.3%)	0
Mobile phones enhance the quality of English education and instruction.	55 (36.4%)	91 (60.3%)	4 (2.6%)	1 (0.07%)
Smart phones present chances to practice English outside the class.	79 (52.3%)	66 (43.7%)	3 (2.0%)	3 (2.0%)
Mobile phones increase motivation for learning English.	62 (41.1%)	78 (51.7%)	2 (1.3%)	9 (6.0%)
Using my mobile phone is effective to enhance oral interaction skills.	43 (28.5%)	85 (56.3%)	8 (5.3%)	15 (9.9%)
Mobile phones offer direct access to educational materials.	59 (39.1%)	77 (51.0%)	6 (4.0%)	9 (0.6%)
My smart phone is a real aid for me with the assignments.	65 (43.0%)	76 (50.3%)	5 (3.3%)	5 (3.3%)
Having a mobile phone is indispensable to my study at the college.	80 (53%)	58 (38.4%)	5 (3.3)	8 (5.3%)

Note: SA: Strongly agree, A: Agree, SD: Strongly disagree, D: Disagree.

Generally, the findings reveal that the use of mobile phones is very effective for learning English. As the table shows, a high proportion of the respondents (98.7%) entirely agreed that mobile phone is an effective tool for learning English, followed by (96.7%) who asserted that mobile phone increases the quality of English education and instruction. In addition, over half of the respondents (96%) were of the view that smartphones give opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. The data analysis also indicated that 141 respondents maintained that mobile phone can be a real assist for them while doing their assignments (93.3%). Therefore, based on the respondents' perspectives, using mobile phone in learning English is effective to a large extent.

The purposes of using mobile phones in learning English

The findings of the second research question are presented in table 2 which indicates the purpose of using mobile phone in learning.

Table 2 the purposes of using mobile phones in learning English

Statement	SA	A	SD	D
To take pictures and videos of essential class work in my classes.	95 (62.9%)	43 (28.5%)	2 (1.3%)	11 (7.3%)
To check class schedules.	81 (53.6%)	63 (41.7%)	2 (1.3%)	5 (3.3%)
To help develop reading, listening, speaking and writing skills.	81 (53.6%)	64 (42.4%)	1 (7%)	5 (3.3%)
To listen to songs in English.	90 (59.6%)	55 (36.4%)	4 (2.6%)	2 (1.3%)
To check different sites which are designed for teaching English.	72 (47.7%)	71 (47.0%)	4 (2.6%)	4 (2.6%)
To develop grammatical skills	58 (38.4%)	75 (49.7%)	7 (4.6%)	11 (7.3%)
To attempt language exercises on website.	55 (36.4%)	67 (44.4%)	9 (6.0%)	20 (13.2%)
To download lesson contents.	64 (42.4%)	68 (45.0%)	5 (3.3%)	14 (9.3%)
To find out the meanings of English words from the online dictionaries	100 (66.2%)	46 (30.5%)	3 (2.0%)	2 (1.3%)

Note: SA: Strongly agree, A: Agree, SD: Strongly disagree, D: Disagree.

As clearly shown in table 2, the three common purposes which received the highest and almost the similar percentages are checking the meaning of English words via online dictionary (96.7%), developing reading, listening, speaking and writing skills (96%) and listening to English songs (96%). Participants also used their mobile phones to serve other different purposes such as checking their timetables (95%), visiting sites that are designed for teaching English (94.7%) and taking pictures and videos of essential class work in the classes (91.4%) respectively. Based on the analysis, it is obvious that the vast majority of the Libyan EFL learners view mobile phones as an integral part of language learning as they can be applied to achieve a number of learning purposes and activities.

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Perceptions of Libyan EFL learners towards using mobile phones in learning English

To find out Libyan EFL learners' perception on the use of mobile phones in learning English, focus group discussions (FGDs) were deployed in the present study. When the respondents were asked, *'should mobile phones be integrated in the educational contexts? Why?'*, all of them strongly agreed that mobile phones must be incorporated into the educational context since they make both the learning and teaching process easy, fast and effective. Additionally, students use mobile phones to translate the meaning of new words, download different educational materials, gain new information and take photos of some important points on the board. Hence, mobile phone aids learners to learn English more efficiently. Followings are some examples of the participants' answers:

'Yes, it should be integrated because using the mobile phone makes the learning process easier and more understandable.' (P5, FGD3).

'Yes, it should be because using mobile phone makes it much easier for students to search and find new information.' (P6, FGD3).

'Yes, mobile phone is necessary in education. You need it to translate new words and we can also use it to search for specific topic.' (P3, FGD1).

In responding to the second question, *'Mobile phone can be used as a means to learn English effectively and it can facilitate learning process. What is your opinion?'*, all the respondents from the three focus groups reached a consensus that mobile phone is a very useful and helpful tool to learn English in an effective way as it offers a variety of applications for learners which make their study easier. Students can also carry out different academic activities such downloading PDF books, taking tests online and doing research.

With regard to whether mobile phones can enhance and improve students' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills, almost all focus groups participants reported that the use of mobile phones can definitely develop and improve the four skills of language and they have positive effects on them. For example, in listening,

learners can listen to an audio of a lecture or listen to English songs. As for speaking, learners can watch English movies and some educational videos. Besides, students can also chat with native speakers which make them fluent speakers. On the other hand, Group 3 participants asserted that mobile phone can develop listening and speaking skills more than writing and reading skills. As stated by one participant: *'In my opinion, mobile phone is very helpful for the speaking and the listening skills but not very much for the reading and the writing skills.'* (P5, FGD3).

Concerning whether the teachers should encourage their students to use their mobile phones inside the classroom for learning purposes, more than half of the respondents from the three focus groups have a consensus that students must be allowed to use their mobile phones in the classroom, but not all the time because they distract the students' attention and make them confused during the lecture. In contrast, some respondents believed that technology can help students get excited, interested and organized. Furthermore, through mobile phones students can get easy access to numerous learning resources, check the meaning of new words via electronic dictionary, record a lecture and search for any topic. Followings are some of the opinions expressed by respondents:

'Yes, I agree to some extent, because the use of mobile phone inside the classroom all the time will distract the students in the classroom. So, the teacher should not allow the students to use the mobile phone all the time.' (P1, FGD3).

'In my point of view, students love technology more for that reason they are likely to be excited about it and keeps them more organized and motivated as well as give them more easy access to their materials.' (P2, FGD1).

In relation to the benefits and shortcomings of the mobile phone use, the respondents from the three groups stated that the use of mobile phones can have a number of advantages. Mobile phones include many useful applications such as dictionary application where learners look up the meaning of words. Students can also have

access to many different resources and download them. Additionally, mobile phones can be easily taken anywhere and everywhere. However, the respondents contend that mobile phones are not always helpful tools as some students use them to cheat during exams. Moreover, mobile phones can waste the students' time since they rely too much on them. Learners can also experience some problems related to the batteries' life or the possibility of mobile phones to break down. Students might also find non useful and negative contents on the Internet.

Regarding if the utilization of mobile phones motivates the students and make them interested to learn the language, all focus group participants expressed similar views in which they emphasized that mobile phones motivate the students during learning. For instance, they can listen to music, play games, do puzzles, watch educational videos, read novels and stories online. Through technology, students can have fun and be more interactive. For example, using social media make students enthusiastic and interested to participate in discussions. Thus, using mobile phone technology increases students' attention and helps them comprehend their lessons so easily.

In answering the seventh question '*Some students believe that mobile phone is not a good and helpful tool. What is your opinion?*', all the participants from the three focus groups stressed that mobile phones are important, fast and useful tools that assist and motivate the students in their study. Furthermore, mobile phones have many programs and applications which can improve learners' four language skills and provide them with different beneficial materials. Excerpts of the respondents' responses are as follows:

'I believe that mobile phone is a very good and helpful tool because it encourages students to learn the language.' (P1, FGD1).

'I do not agree with that. Mobile phone is very useful in learning English, and it is important for students to download some applications to help them while they are studying.' (P1, FGD3).

'I think it is a good tool for learning English because you will find a lot of materials for what you want to learn in English whether it was grammar, listening, speaking or reading and writing.' (P6, FGD3).

'I do not think so. This is not right because mobile phone apps are very helpful in many aspects of learning English as it helps the students to improve their vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening and writing.' (P1, FGD2).

With respect to their opinions of whether mobile phones can prevent students from learning English in better way, almost all the respondents were against that because according to them mobile phone can offer better opportunities for learners while learning, and it can make learning process, easy, interesting and fast. In addition to that, learners can chat with speakers from English speaking countries, download educational applications and search for new information. In this way, learners can develop their language skills and become proficient learners.

DISCUSSION

The results yield by the current study demonstrated that using mobile phones is very effective in language learning by Libyan learners. These findings go in line with Fernandez's (2018) study which revealed that the majority of the South African students deemed that using mobile phones in learning is very useful. Similar studies (see, e.g., Thornton & Houser, 2005; FallahKhair, Pemberton & Griffiths, 2007; Rosell & Aguilar, 2007) also showed that mobile phones are efficient and valuable tools for learning. The results of present study are also in conformity with an earlier research by Al-Fahad (2009) who found that Saudi Arabian students completely agreed that learning through mobile phones was too efficient. Additionally, the findings of the current study are in line with Pachler, 2007, Tennant, 2008, Macconth, Praul and Lynch, 2008, Vyas and Nirban, 2014, and Umam, Aini, and Rahayu, 2019. However, Anastasia's (2013) findings showed that the students did not think that mobile phone is effective in learning due to time and space. In the

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same line, a research done by Jumoke, Oloruntoba and Blessing (2015) concluded that mobile phones had a negative influence on the academic achievement of the Nigerian learners as their attention was merely focused on music, games and chatting whereas academic activities were totally disregarded.

The findings of the present study revealed that nearly all the Libyan EFL learners utilized their mobile phones to achieve three common purposes namely, checking the meaning of English words via online dictionary, listening to English songs and developing the skills of reading, listening, speaking and writing. These findings echo with Dang's (2013) investigation which showed that nearly all the Vietnamese students stressed that they used their mobile phones frequently to translate the meaning of lexis via electronic dictionary. Yaman, Senel and Yesilel (2015) also reported that a large number of Turkish students looked up the meaning of new lexical items on the dictionary of their mobiles. In the same vein, Liang, Liu, Tsai and Lin (2014) found that looking for the meaning of words using dictionary was the most common mobile phone application in learning by Taiwanese learners. As the new terms and words constitute a significant, and even the major part of language learning to which smart phones offer support, it is comprehensible that the learners utilize online and offline dictionaries regularly (Abbasi & Hashemi, 2013; Rahimi & Miri, 2014; Thornton & Houser, 2005; Wu, 2014). One of the main purposes for using mobile devices by learners is to find out the meanings of the new terms. Learners prefer to use their mobile phones dictionary rather than checking a printed dictionary (Bezircilioğlu, 2016). Hulstijn (2001) also advocated that students can use their smart phones for learning new vocabulary using electronic dictionary. The findings of this study are parallel with what was previously found by Omari, Bourekkadi, Slimani, Khouliji and Kerkeb (2017) who stated that most Moroccan students affirmed that they applied their mobile phones mainly to listen to songs. Similar results in another study by Chhikara (2015) also demonstrated that using mobile phones in learning English among Indian learners was very

helpful because it assisted them to improve and develop the skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. Moreover, Alemi, Sarab and Lari, (2012) indicated that mobile phone has a crucial role to set the basis for the four skills of language. The results of the present study do not corroborate with Kukulska-Hulme's and Traxler's (2005) findings which concluded that smart phones did not provide helpful applications for developing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills because they were not provided with specific learning purposes. Stockwell (2008) also revealed that Japanese learners believe that it took long time for carrying out English tasks on their phones to enhance their skills.

The current study demonstrated that Libyan EFL learners expressed positive views towards using mobile phones in learning. These results are supported by Zou and Li (2015) who emphasized that the vast majority of Chinese students manifested positive perceptions regarding the use of mobile phones. Similarly, Ababneh (2017) asserted that Jordanian students had positive attitudes towards using mobile phone in learning. Furthermore, another research by AlHajri's, Al-Sharhan's and Al-Hunaiyyan's (2017) also showed that Kuwaiti students held positive attitudes towards mobile learning. On the contrary, Stockwell (2010) indicated that Japanese students exhibited negative opinions towards the use of mobile phone as most of them liked to utilize their computers rather than their phones for doing vocabulary activities and 60% of them did not use their mobile phones for the vocabulary activities. It was also found that due to the cost, size of screen and trouble inputting data, learners preferred to use the computer instead of the mobile phone. Motiwalla's (2007) research also revealed that the American students were not pleased with the interface of mobile phone owing to its small screen and slow speed in connection.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the present study, it is clearly deduced that the use of mobile phones has a positive and effective impact on

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learning English among Libyan EFL learners. In fact, all the Libyan learners entirely agreed that mobile phones are indispensable tools that should be integrated into educational setting to make learning faster, easy and interesting. Therefore, from the Libyan EFL learners' viewpoints, mobile phones are regarded as an integral part of their university study where they can be exploited to do a variety of academic activities in and outside the classroom context.

Since the findings of the present study do not represent all the Libyan EFL learners in the department of English, it is recommended that further research involve a larger number of students to generalize the findings of the study. More research is also needed to further investigate the use of mobile phones in the Libyan context as there is a lack of studies in this area. It is also suggested that future research explore the influence of gender as a main variable on the use of mobile technology in EFL classroom, which would be worth of investigation. To yield comprehensive and inclusive results in the future, it would be more appropriate if interviews were conducted with EFL teachers to gain clear insight into their perceptions towards the use of mobile phones in learning English.

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