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## Students' Attitudes Towards Using Smart phones in English Language Learning During the Spread of COVID-19. A Field Study in the Secondary Schools in Lattakia Governorate

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## البحث السابع

## **Students' Attitudes Towards Using Smart phones in English Language Learning During the Spread of COVID-19. A Field Study in the Secondary Schools in Lattakia Governorate**

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### **Abstract**

Mobile-assisted language learning could be considered an effective tool in supporting English language learning. Smart phones provided students with an easy accessibility to the internet resources regardless the limits of time and place. This research, therefore, investigated students' attitudes towards using smart phones technology in English language learning for secondary schools students during the spread of COVID-19 in Lattakia. The questionnaires were distributed randomly to a mixed-gender sample consisting of one hundred students (50 males, 50 females). The descriptive-analytical approach was used in this study in which the data were gathered through the use of questionnaire for students in the secondary schools. The data were analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results of the study indicated that secondary school students had a positive attitude towards the role of smart phones in learning English. Students revealed their motivation and eagerness to adapt their smart phones devices for English language learning as a solution of the educational loss resulted during the spread of COVID-19.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, Smartphone, COVID-19.

## **1.Introduction:**

"Use of mobile technology started in 21st century and it gave a birth to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) which refers to learning languages via mobile devices/phones. Mobile Learning makes learning more private and individual matter as well as it makes learning possible in formal and informal situations" Naz, Rasheed, & Rasheed, 2019, p.18). However, with the development of the smart phone and applications, Users are no longer dependent on the work of the hardware manufacturer for the functionalities of their personal mobile phones. The smart phone has become a more personalized device. It is now an electronic device that the users can fill it with software and applications (OTT,2017). "This rapid change in technology has changed the process of educating students. Mobile phones, smart phones, tablets have become indispensable to everyone because of their utility and usefulness in language learning if used effectively"(Jati, 2018, p.144).

Therefore, Smart technology becomes an essential part of our daily life and one of the most important component of educational technology. Thus, the integration of smart technology in teaching and learning English language can make this process more effective. Moreover, this type of technology offers an interactive learning environment for both learner and teacher. learning English as a foreign language faces many problems ; one of these problems is the lack of an interactive practice inside the classroom. In this direction smart technology offers an opportunity for students to practice English inside and outside the classroom regardless of the limits of time and place."This broad usage of mobile devices has drawn lots of mobile applications in English Language Learning. Numerous apps are available for language learners to download through the access of the internet. One of those mobile applications is Duolingo"(Pramesti&Ani Susanti,2020,p.1800).

The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has disastrous impact on education. It has become a critical issue to maintain the continuity of the learning process when face-to-face delivery is not possible. Online learning is emerging as a necessity to meet the challenges of COVID-19 outbreak as well as taking advantage of the enormous advances in information technology ( Maphosa, Dube, &Jita, 2020, p.84). Thus, students have positive attitudes towards using mobile learning for their study during COVID-19 pandemic time. In this direction, smart phone plays an important role as a useful tool for this pandemic time where students can learn from outside of the classroom or participate in class from anywhere(Biswas<sup>1</sup>, Roy<sup>2</sup> & Roy<sup>3</sup>, 2020).

## **2. Problem of the Research**

The researcher noticed that some students were constantly using their smart phones for their personal entertainment without paying attention to classroom activities. Inattention in classroom due to the use of smart phones might be highly affected academic performance negatively. Therefore, the researcher tried to solve this problem by using the most attractive technology as an instrument for English Language learning. Yet the Syrian educational system is faced with the challenge of the spread of COVID-19."The impact of this crisis on schools has brought into sharp focus the importance of access to digital technology and connectivity to support all young people's learning. The vast majority of schools, colleges and providers stepped up, transforming classroom-based sessions into online learning modules almost overnight"(Neil Bates,2020,P:22). Thus, learners can learn by themselves using devices like smart phones in order to find solutions for the educational crises resulted in lockdown of schools. Consequently, the students tried to find an alternative to continue the learning process of English language by using smart phones. This study explores students' attitudes about how Smart phones are playing an important role in learning English learning . Moreover, it investigates how

students' attitudes to use smart phones for learning English during the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, the problem of the research can be summarized in the following question: **What are the secondary schools students' attitudes towards using smart phones in English language learning during the spread of covid-19 in the secondary schools of Lattakia governorate?**

### **3. Significance of the Research**

The importance of this study includes the following points:

- 3.1. This study can be an attempted to explore students' attitudes towards the integration of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of covid-19.
- 3.2. This study may respond to students' needs of distance learning during the educational crises.
- 3.3. It is also an investigation into the learners' need to continue the learning process during the spread of COVID-19.

### **4. The Research aims**

1. Investigating students' attitudes about the using of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of covid-19.
2. Investigating the difference among students' attitudes (male and female) about the effective role of smart phones in English language learning.
3. Identifying how the spread of COVID-19 affects the students' attitudes towards the use of smart phones in English language learning.
4. developing suggestions that might help to increase the use of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of COVID-19.

### **5. The Research Questions**

1. What are the students' attitudes about the using of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of covid-19?

2. What are the students' attitudes about the using of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of covid-19. the difference among students' attitudes (male and female) about the effective role of smart phones in English language learning?
3. how the spread of COVID-19 affects the students' attitudes towards the use of smart phones in English language learning?
4. What are the students' attitudes about the using of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of covid-19. suggestions that might help to increase the use of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of COVID-19?

## **6. Hypotheses of the Research**

The researcher will test the following hypotheses at the significant level of ( 0.05) :

- 6.1. There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students on the students' attitudes scale towards using the smart phones in English language learning due to the spread of COVID-19.
- 6.2. There is no statistically significant difference between the attitudes of the males and females towards using the smart phones in English language learning due to the spread of COVID-19.

## **7. Research Methodology and Design**

### **7.1. Method**

The researcher used descriptive-analytical method to study the students' attitude towards using smart phone in English language learning during the spread of covid-19 in the secondary schools of Lattakia governorate.

### **7.2. Sample**

The research sample is randomly selected from the secondary schools of Lattakia governorate. The sample consists of (100)

secondary schools students. The sample is divided into (50) male and (50) female).

## **8. Search Variables**

Independent variable:

-The gender variable

Dependent variable:

-The students' attitudes scale towards using the smart phones in English language learning due to the spread of COVID-19.

## **9. Research Limits:**

Time limitation: This research was applied in the academic year 2020-2021.

Spatial limitation: This research was applied only the public secondary schools in Lattakia.

Human limitation: This research was applied to the secondary schools students.

## **10. Terminology and Procedural Definitions**

### **10.1 Attitude:**

"The word "attitude" refers to the learner's relative tendency which is formed by the accumulation of cognitive and behavioral experiences which can lead to specific responses to individual and group negatively and positively towards life" (Majdil and Shura, 2012,pp.23,24).Other researchers defined attitude as"a tendency to act toward or against something in the environment which becomes thereby a positive or negative value" (Bashar, 2012,p. 62).The researcher defines attitude as students' desire to use smart phones in English language learning.

### **10.2.Smartphone**

"Smart phones are a class of mobile phones and of multi-purpose mobile computing devices. They are distinguished from feature phones by their stronger hardware capabilities and



extensive mobile operating systems"(Rahman, 2019,p.17). Others define Smartphone as a "small device that contains advanced and developed functions beyond making phone calls and sending-receiving text messages, they have typically a touch screen, interface, an operating system in addition a system of internet access to download different applications" Rahmani&Mezreg, 2018,p.9). The researcher defines smart phones as an instructional instrument which can be used to enhance the learning process.

### **10.3.Mobile-Assisted Language Learning**

"learning with the assistance of small portable electronic devices such as smart phones available to the learner when needed. Mobile devices have generated a branch of studies that relates to language learning and mobile technologies named Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)"( Saidouni&Bahloul, 2016, pp.124-125 ). The researcher defines mobile-assisted language learning as a process in which mobile can be an effective instrument to develop English language learning.

### **10.4. COVID-19**

The virus that causes COVID-19 is highly infectious. The initial outbreak was recorded in Wuhan province in China and its first death was on 9 January 2020 and then it spread quickly across the globe, with the major economies being the hardest hit. This resulted in many governments implementing measures that restricted gathering and movement of people to contain the spread of the disease commonly known as social distancing. The outbreak forced governments to shut down most educational institutions such as school (Maphosa, Dube, &Jita, 2020, p.84). The researcher defines COVID-19 as a disease which highly affected the continuity of learning process.

## 11.Previous studies:

### 1-Layali & Al-Shlowiy (2020). Students' Perceptions of e-Learning for ESL/EFL in Saudi Universities and their Implications during Corona virus Pandemic: A Review of literature.

This study aims to achieve the following purposes:

- 1- It aimed to report on the students' perceptions of the various e-learning technologies such as Mobile applications such as Telegram and WhatsApp, video-conferencing tools such as Skype and Zoom; and Social Media sites such as Face book for learning ESL/EFL in Saudi universities at Corona virus time
- 2- It aimed to find out the benefits of using such e-learning tools, platforms and applications for ESL/EFL in Saudi universities.
- 3- It Investigated students' perceptions towards E-learning tools, platforms in Saudi universities.

The sample of the study

Using Google Scholar and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), (40) studies were selected. Studies focusing on students' perceptions were used as the review attempted to explore the benefits of student-centered education. Participants were 30 students and 31 educators from Linguistics, Math, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) departments at King Abdulaziz University and King Khalid University.

Methodology

This study used questionnaires and interviews to explore students' perceptions of e-learning tools such as Google Docs, Telegram and Mobile Technologies in Saudi universities during Corona virus time. Qualitative data were gleaned via semi-structured interviews that aimed to obtain the participants' perceptions of mobile technologies for learning and academic purposes.

Results

The students' mainly positive views of e-learning could be attributed to the features of web 0.2, which supported and facilitated these e-learning applications. Web 0.2 had interactive interface enabling two-way student-student and student-teacher communication. Such a feature allowed for social learning where students helped each other and received a help from their teachers via feedback.

## **2-Bailey &Rakushin(2020).Learning from Experience in the Midst of COVID-19: Benefits, Challenges, and Strategies in Online Teaching.**

This study aimed to explore expectations for benefits, challenges, and strategies held by EFL university lecturers at three levels of online teaching experience, high (HE), low (LE), and no experience (NE) groups. The sample consisted of 43 EFL university instructors who asked to complete the study survey. All instructors were native English speakers teaching EFL in South Korea. Moreover, all instructors were teaching English communication courses during the spring 2020 semester, when South Korea ordered universities to delay offline courses and transfer lessons online indefinitely. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 24.0) was used for survey analysis. Originally 51 surveys were completed but four were removed due to incomplete answers and four were removed because the survey taker did not meet the inclusion criteria. . A series of independent t-tests were carried out to identify statistically significant differences between category items. The results indicated Instructors across South Korea were thrust upon the online teaching stage, allowing the comparison of expectations between teachers with and without online teaching experience. Other serious local, regional, national, and international crises may occur in the future, and educators need to develop online learning contingency plans to mitigate any anticipated educational challenges. Several key findings were uncovered from this research due to the unique situation brought on by the corona virus pandemic.

### **3-Ali (2020).Online and Remote Learning in Higher Education Institutes: A Necessity in light of COVID-19 Pandemic.**

This study aimed to examine how teaching and learning can still continue during the spread of corona virus pandemic. An exploratory research design was used in this study. This research used rigorous qualitative methods to synthesize existing qualitative studies to construct the results in which meta-analyses of qualitative approach also known as meta-syntheses synthesis which allowed for systematic review of qualitative studies .The results revealed that universities worldwide were moving more and more towards online learning or E-Learning. Findings also revealed that apart from resources, staff readiness, confidence, student accessibility and motivation played an important function in ICT integrated learning. This exploratory research supposed that staff members should use technology and technological gadgets to enhance learning especially during these exceptional times. Findings also propose online and remote learning as a necessity in times of lock downs and social distancing due to the spread of COVID-19.

### **4-Subedi, S.1, Nayaju, S.2, Subedi, S.3, Kumar, S.4, Shah, J.5.(2020). Impact of E-learning during COVID-19 Pandemic among Nursing Students and Teachers of Nepal.**

The aim of this study was to measure the effect of E-learning during the COVID-19 pandemic among Nursing students and teachers of Nepal. The specific objectives were to assess the attitude towards benefits of e-learning among nursing students and teachers, to assess the activities/problems faced by students while learning through electronic media. The study was used descriptive method which was focused to the nursing teachers and students of Nepal. The sample size of this study was 1116 respondents. Nursing colleges of Nepal were selected by convenience sampling method for the feasibility of the researcher

where most of the nursing teachers and the students were taking online class. The primary quantitative data was obtained by self-administered questionnaire through online survey method. Teachers and students of Nursing Faculties were selected from 13 different nursing colleges of Nepal who were conducting online classes during the COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown. Result indicated nearly half of the teachers (42.3%) got disturbed for their online class because of the electricity problem, 48.1% because of internet problems. More than half of the students (63.2%) were affected because of electricity and 63.6% internet problem, only 64.4% of the students had internet access for their online classes. However, 64.3% of students used data pack for their online class, 58.4% used mobile (cell phone), and there is a significant association of selected demographic variables of the respondents with most of the statements (Attitude and Problems/Activities). (P-value <0.05). The research concludes that most of the respondents affected by disturbances during online classes because of internet and electricity problem, also students were compelled to use data packs for their online classes. Although the course may be completed the objectives of students and college will not be achieved if the problems during online classes are not solved.

### **5-Biswas, Roy, & Roy. (2020). Students Perception of Mobile Learning during COVID-19 in Bangladesh: University Student Perspective.**

The purpose of this study was to measures the student's perception using mobile for learning during COVID-19 in Bangladesh especially at the university student's perspective. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, mobile learning might help the students to bridge the gap in order to maintain the learning process. This survey method was conducted on 416 students from different university students in Bangladesh to understand the student's perception of using mobile phones as a learning system. The research was used research were students

from the various universities in Bangladesh. The developed questionnaire quantitative descriptive with survey methods. The sample of this was based on the previous literature. The structure of the questionnaires was modified from several former studies. The study showed that students were very familiar with mobile learning, had a positive perception of mobile learning, and students used various social media for their study during COVID-19 pandemic time. This research also revealed that e-learning was very helpful to recover the study gap during this COVID-19 pandemic time.

**6-Sudan, F. (2020). The Effectiveness of E-Learning in Meeting the Educational Needs of Students in Light of the Crises Resulting from the Corona Virus From the Teachers Point of View.**

The research aimed to identify the effectiveness of e-learning in order to meet the educational needs of students in the light of the crises resulting from the outbreak of Corona virus from the teachers' point of view. To achieve the objectives of the research, the researcher used an electronic questionnaire that was applied to a sample of primary education teachers from (1-6). the number of those who answered the questionnaire reached 672 of teachers.

The results revealed that :

- There were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the responses of the individuals in the research sample to the questionnaire due to the variable of experience between: teachers with experience (less than 5 years) and teachers with the experience of (5-10 years) in favor of experienced teachers (less than 5 years) with the higher mean scores in the total score except in the evaluation .
- There were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the responses of the individuals in the research sample to the questionnaire due to the gender variable (male, female) in favor of females with the higher mean scores except in the evaluation.

### **12.3.Methodology of the Research**

#### **12.3.1 Design of the Research**

The researcher adopted a descriptive-analytical design in investigating students' attitudes about the using of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of covid-19.

#### **12.3.2.Designing the Scale of Attitudes**

The researcher designed the scale of attitudes according to the following steps:

##### **1.Reviewing Literature**

The researcher came back to literature in which students' attitudes were measured in field of web-based technology such as: (Biswas, Roy, & Roy. (2020);Layali& Al-Shlowiy (2020).

#### **12.3.3.Objectives of the Scale of Attitudes:**

The researcher prepared the scale of attitudes to measure the affective domain for students. Studying attitudes could be a very important procedure in the instructional process. Attitudes were defined by words such as emotional content, beliefs, reactions, evaluations and state of readiness. The factors such as physiological effect, personality, and process of socialization, group membership and group norm contributed to the formation of attitudes as well Within the framework of these definitions; it was possible to state that the attitude generally included a tendency, stance and reaction. Attitudes were influenced by personal opinions(Yıldız, Kızıldaş, 2018).

#### **12.3.4.Identifying the Fields of Attitudes**

The researcher identified that the scale should cover students' attitudes about the using of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of covid-19.

#### **12.3.5.Collecting and writing items of the scale**

The researcher wrote about (20) items. These items were written in clear and understandable statements. These items focused on

students' attitudes about the using of smart phones in English language learning during the spread of covid-19.

### 12.3.6. Correcting the Scale of Attitudes

Likert scale was described as the set of items, composed of approximately an equal number of favorable and unfavorable statements concerning the attitude object that was given to a group. Respondents were instructed to select: strongly agree, agreed, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree (Olaniyi, 2019).

There were five options of answer for each item. A Likert five-dimensional scale was distributed as the following: (5) degrees for the answer (**Strongly Agree**), (4) degrees for the answer (**Agree**), (3) degrees for the answer (**Undecided**), (2) degrees for the answer (**Disagree**), (1) degree for the answer (**Strongly Disagree**). Therefore, the total score for each item in the scale of attitude was (5) and the least score was (1).

### 13. Studying Students' Attitudes:

A Likert five-dimensional scale was applied to measure the experimental students' attitudes . A Likert five-dimensional scale.

#### The mechanism of Correcting Scale:

- If mean score is less than ( $M < 3.5$ ), then the attitude is **negative**.
- If mean score is (3.5) or bigger than (3.5), then the attitude is **positive**.

**What is the students' Students' attitudes in the secondary schools towards using smart phone in English language?**

**Table (1).**  
**Students' attitudes towards using smartphone in English language**

No .	Items	Mean	Std. D	%	Attitude
1.	Smart phone has assisted my overall English language learning.	٣.٩٧	٠.٦٠	79.40	Positive



2.	It is better to plan for my English learning with the smart phone than without it.	٤.١٣	٠.٧٢	82.60	Positive
3.	I find that the use of smartphone has enhanced the learning process.	٣.٩٠	٠.٩١	78.00	Positive
4.	My vocabulary acquisition has increased because the use of text messages written in English.	٣.٨٣	٠.٨٦	76.60	Positive
5.	My vocabulary acquisition has increased due to the use of smart phone dictionary.	٤.٠٠	٠.٨٦	80.00	Positive
6.	I find it easy to write and receive text- messages in English.	٣.٩٢	٠.٩٩	78.40	Positive
7.	My motivation has been enhanced by using smart phone inside and outside the classroom.	٣.٧٩	٠.٩٤	75.80	Positive
8.	I believe that using smart phone in learning English is very effective in the time of educational crises.	٤.٣٣	٠.٤٧	86.60	Positive
9.	My motivation has been enhanced by the use of smartphone in and outside the classroom.	٤.١٣	٠.٦٦	82.60	Positive
10.	Smartphone has helped me to learn English anywhere.	٤.٠٨	٠.٨٥	81.60	Positive
11.	Smartphone has helped me to learn English anytime.	٣.٩٣	٠.٧٣	78.60	Positive
12.	Smartphone has enabled students to read English novels	٤.١٧	٠.٥٨	83.40	Positive
13.	Smartphone has enabled students to read English books.	٤.٢٦	٠.٥٨	85.20	Positive
14.	Students need smartphones necessarily in learning process due to the spread of Corona virus.	٤.١٩	٠.٦٥	83.80	Positive

15.	Smartphone makes students able to update their information constantly.	٣.٩٧	٠.٥٤	79.40	Positive
16.	Smartphone has enabled students to pronounce English words correctly.	٣.٥٦	٠.٥٦	71.20	Positive
17.	Smartphone has enabled students to speak English accurately.	١.٧٠	٠.٧٨	34.00	<b>Negative</b>
18.	I find it easy to use smartphone in learning process during the time of closing schools.	٣.٨٣	٠.٩٧	76.60	Positive
19.	Smartphone has enabled students to communicate with colleagues in English.	٣.٨٢	٠.٨٩	76.40	Positive
20.	I think that Smartphone help students to spell English words correctly .	٤.٠٠	٠.٧٢	80.00	Positive
<b>Total</b>		3.87	0.19	<b>77.40</b>	Positive

Table ( 1) indicates the total mean score for the scale of attitude as all is (3.87); standard deviation is (0.19), percentage of mean score is (**77.4%**). This means that students in the secondary Schools have a **positive attitude** towards using smart phone in English language.

**The First Hypothesis:** There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students on the students' attitudes scale towards using the smart phones in English language learning due to the spread of COVID-19.

**The Results of the First Hypothesis:** restate this hypothesis are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students on the students' attitudes scale towards using the smart phones in English language learning due to the spread of COVID-19.

**The Second Hypothesis:** There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students in the secondary schools in the scale of attitude towards using smartphone in English language due to gender variables (Males – Females)

**Table (2). Results of Independent Samples Test for comparing between Males and Females in in the scale of attitude towards using smartphone in English language**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Descriptive Statistics</i>		<i>Independent Samples Test</i>		
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.D</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig</i>
<b>Males</b>	٣.٨٤	٠.٢٠	1.57	119	0.119
<b>Females</b>	٣.٨٩	٠.١٨	-		

Table (2) shows that value of *Sig is (0.119) bigger than (0.05)* in all tests; Thus, the differences between males' mean scores and females are very slim and these differences aren't significant. The mean` score for males is (3.84) whereas mean` score for males is (3.89).

**The Results of the Second Hypothesis:** There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of students in the secondary schools in the scale of attitude towards using smart phone in English language due to gender variables (Males – Females).

#### **14. Conclusion**

An accurate investigation for results of statistical analysis gave a clear image about the effect of using the smart phones in English language learning due to the spread of COVID-19. Results indicated that that students proved to have positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of using the smart phones in English language learning due to the spread of COVID-19.

Thus, the researcher found that using the smart phones in teaching English led to the following points:

1. Teaching by using the smart phones was more effective than teaching by the traditional method.

- 2.Using the smart phones enhanced students' positive attitudes towards the learning process.
- 3.Using of the smart phones in Syrian schools faced many obstacles.
- 4-Using smart phones learning provided students with an interactive learning environment .

## **15.Recommendation**

In the light of the results, the researcher recommended:

- 1.Dependent on the smart phones and E-learning strategies to learn English.
- 2.Curriculum designers must take into consideration the nature of using smart phones and provide the curriculum of English language with a variety techniques and strategies in which students can participate through the web-based learning materials.
- 3.Providing students with the necessary modern equipments in order to use the smart phones effectively such as: enough computers, interactive smart boards, multimedia resources and Internet access.
- 4.Training English language teachers and students to use modern instructional technology.

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<< وصل هذا البحث إلى المجلة بتاريخ ٢٠٢١/٥/٢٦، وصدرت الموافقة على نشره بتاريخ ٢٠٢١/٨/٢٢ >>