The Effect of Using a Smartphone Application on Middle School Students’ English Expression Learning and Satisfaction

Wonhwa Seo (Korea University)
Inn-Chull Choi (Korea University)


The aim of the study is to investigate the effect of a mobile application (Speaking 200) on Korean middle school students’ achievement and satisfaction. Two groups participated in this study: the experimental group who worked with the application and the control group who was provided with handouts. Each group was divided into two subgroups based on the subjects’ score of a standardized listening test. Participants took a pretest at the beginning of the study and completed the posttest and survey after six weeks. Independent t-tests were used to analyze differences in experimental and control groups for both elementary and advanced level learners. Results revealed a significant difference between pre and post scores for elementary level learners. The results indicate that use of mobile application was more effective for the elementary level of learners than advanced learners. As for the survey results, participants responses were relatively positive in terms of functionality, ease of use and portability. Comments on improvements of the mobile application were collected from participants using an open-ended questionnaire. Educational implications of the study and further research were suggested based on the findings.

**Keywords** MALL, mobile assisted language learning, smart-phone application, speaking 200,

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of mobile technology brought changes in education and its availability has made learning possible anytime and anywhere (Chinnery, 2006; Kukulska-Hulme, 2006). Language learning is one of the areas that has benefited from this development. Researchers
have tried to verify the benefits of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) which are underpinned by the inherent characteristics: ‘spontaneous, personal, informal, portable and ubiquitous’ (Kukulska-Hulme, 2006). Studies have also shown that mobile devices, smart-phones, in particular, have potential as an instructional tool for language learning which satisfies learners’ needs and interests (Martin & Ertzberger, 2013; Sandberg, Maris & Geus, 2011; Tayebinik & Puteh, 2012).

With the increasing number of smart-phone users, mobile applications for language learning are in demand and increasingly being developed (S. Y. Kim, 2013). Mobile applications are considered an ideal tool for language learning since they provide learners with a new learning environment, which enables language learning to occur not only inside but also outside the classroom. Although, studies on MALL applications were conducted recently by many researchers (Chu, 2011; H. S. Kim, 2013; H. Y. Kim, 2013; Kwon 2013; Park, 2013; Yang, 2012, etc.), most of them focused on university students. Furthermore, the findings of previous research mostly focused on the analyses of mobile applications and learners’ experiences (Cho, 2009; Chu, 2011; H. Y. Kim, 2013; Kim & Kwon, 2012; Kukulska-Hulme, 2009; Kwon, 2013; Yang, 2012). There are few quantitative studies that report about the learning effect of using mobile applications targeting English language learners in secondary education.

This experimental research attempts to investigate the effect of a MALL application applied at the secondary school level. The study explores the impact of the educational application Speaking 200 and students’ responses as Speaking 200 users. Research questions are as follows:

1. Does use of a mobile application outside the language classroom affect students’ achievement of learning English expressions?
2. Does middle school students’ experience of using a mobile application affect their overall satisfaction regarding use of mobile devices for language learning?

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1. Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

The advent of new mobile devices and learning applications facilitated mobile learning in various fields of study including language learning (Hsua, 2013). The integration of mobile learning and language learning which is referred to Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has become a new field of study in language teaching and learning. Researchers asserted that