

## The Impact of Smart Phones on Iraqi EFL Learners' Proficiency

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### Abstract

The goal of the study was to measure smart phones impacted Iraqi EFL learners' proficiency and their attitudes towards it. The study included (60) female students who were enrolled at AL-Motamizeen Secondary School for Girls during the first course of the academic year 2021-2022. The sample was divided into two groups at random: Group (A) was an experimental group of 35 students, whereas group (B) was a control group of 35 students. Independent sample *T*-test was used to investigate the impact of Smart Phones on Learners' Proficiency in EFL Education. Also, one-way between groups (ANOVA) was used to the four language skills aspects of language (writing, speaking, reading, listening) for the pre- and post-assessments. The post-test indicated substantial differences between the experimental group's mean scores and the control group's mean scores in favor of the experimental group. The study's findings also revealed that employing smart phones in education is an effective way to improve students' English language skills. Also, the questionnaires were adapted by the researcher, which based on the study of Biswas, Roy, & Roy(2020), to investigate learners' attitudes towards Smart Phones. The results of the study indicated that AL-Motamizeen Secondary School for Girls had a positive attitude towards the role of smart phones in learning English. The researcher presented conclusions and recommendations for additional research based on the study's findings.

**Keywords:** Smart phones, Proficiency, attitudes and English Language.

### المستخلص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية قياس تأثير الهواتف الذكية على كفاءة متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق ومواقفهم تجاهها. اشتملت الدراسة على (60) طالبة التحقت بثانوية المتميزات للبنات خلال الفصل الدراسي الأول للعام الدراسي 2021-2022. قسمت العينة إلى مجموعتين عشوائياً: المجموعة (أ) كانت مجموعة تجريبية من 35 طالبا، بينما المجموعة (ب) كانت مجموعة ضابطة من 35 طالبا. تم استخدام نموذج T-test المستقل للتحقيق في تأثير الهواتف الذكية على كفاءة المتعلمين في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. أيضاً، تم استخدام طريقة واحدة بين المجموعات (ANOVA) لجوانب المهارات اللغوية الأربعة (الكتابة والتحدث والقراءة والاستماع) للاختبارات القبليّة والبعدية. وقد اشار الاختبار البعدي إلى وجود فروق ذات دلالة احصائية بين متوسطات درجات المجموعة التجريبية ومتوسط درجات المجموعة الضابطة لصالح المجموعة التجريبية. كما كشفت نتائج الدراسة أن استخدام الهواتف الذكية في التعليم هو وسيلة فعالة لتحسين مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية لدى الطلاب. كما تم تكييف الاستبيانات من قبل الباحث، والتي تستند إلى دراسة بيسواس وروي وروي (2020) للتحقيق في مواقف المتعلمين تجاه الهواتف الذكية. أشارت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن ثانوية المتميزات للبنات كان لها توجه إيجابي تجاه دور الهواتف الذكية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية، وقدمت الباحثة استنتاجات وتوصيات لأبحاث إضافية بناءً على نتائج الدراسة.

### 1.1. Introduction

Technology has also had an impact on the learning environment and teaching experience. Cell phones, personal digital assistants, smart phones, tablets, and other mobile devices are examples of mobile devices. All of these gadgets are simple to use in the language classroom for both students and instructors. After incorporating mobile technology into English instruction, instructors' roles have shifted in a beneficial way (Mehta, 2012,p.36).

Mobile phones contributed successfully in the field of learning in various ways. For example, learning through mobile helps learners not only in improving their literacy and numeracy skills but also to recognize their existing abilities. In addition, it encourages independent and collaborative learning respectively (Attewell, 2004, p.60).

Using smartphones to study English gave students new options and different learning strategies, such as the link between instructors, students, and learning materials (Babiker, 2015, p. 24). The usage of smartphone technology in the classroom inspired students and aided their learning (Alqahtani and Mohammad, 2015; Tal and Gross, 2014). According to several studies, incorporating technology into the classroom resulted in new learning methodologies, increased student accomplishment, and decreased anxiety (Babiker, 2015; Thinley, Reye and Geva, 2014 and Luo, Lin, Chen & Fang, 2015).

Learning through Mobile Phones, students can use online materials and communicate with others in a short time. Mobile Phones can be regarded as one of the most influential and vital vehicles of communication. The advanced features of mobiles can be taken into consideration by learners and teachers in learning English. They should take the advantage of mobile up-to-date features to help their learning (Mehta, 2012, p. 38).

Furthermore, studying outside of the classroom via mobile phones has the benefit of better using the learner's spare time; even pupils on the go may enhance their learning skills (Kukulka-Hulme, 2009, p.160). Learners can record their own voice using mobile devices with multimedia capabilities. Then, teachers will be able to listen to the students' voices to make an assessment and justify weaknesses in the students' pronunciation (Ozer and Kılıç, 2018, p.2917).

### **1.2. The Problem and its Significance**

The problem of the study stems from the fact that learners study for many years but they cannot speak and write English very well and cannot express themselves whenever they are put in real life situations. This might be due to the fact that students do not have chances to interact with their instructors and the surroundings world. In turn, this cannot be achieved alone without the help of technology. Therefore the fact that technology is not quite common among the pupils at school can constitute a problem that calls for investigation in order to estimate empirically the effectiveness of using it in language learning. As a result, the researcher is going to examine the effect of using technology in teaching English through a new method called (E Learning in general, smart phones in particular) and hoping that it will fill a gap of using computer technology at school as a new and suitable way of teaching. This study may also be viewed as an attempt to investigate students' attitudes toward the use of smart phones in English language instruction. This study is essential in that it adds to the base of information on pedagogical intervention in the development of learners' proficiency through the use of technology, specifically smart phone technology.

### **1.3. Aims of the Study**

The aims of present study are:

1. To investigate the impact of Smart Phones on Iraqi EFL Learners' Proficiency
2. To find out which skill (speaking, listening, writing, or reading) the experimental group's students improve the most as a result of utilizing smart phones.
3. Examining students' attitudes of the use of smart phones in English language instruction.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

The following questions were intended to be answered by this research:

1. Are there any statistically significant differences in proficiency between the experimental and control groups as a result of using smart phones?
2. Which of the experimental group's skills (speaking, listening, writing, or reading) improves the most as a result of utilizing smart phones?
3. What are the attitudes of learners on the use of smart phones in English language learning?

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1. Smartphone in EFL**

Many people, including educational stakeholders, have benefited from technological advancements. Smartphones, Internet-enabled devices with computer apps and software, are

one of the most significant technological advances of the twenty-first century. Denying the reality of technology is incorrect since most firms today demand graduates who are technologically proficient (Hsu, 2013,p.199). The smartphone, according to Nalliveetil and Alenazi (2016), introduces a new manner of learning that should be completely utilized in order to match student expectations. The demand will grow as a result of the new generation being born with cellphones; pupils will be more active and habituated to using these technology (p.266).

According to Rahman (2019), **“Smart phones are a class of mobile phones and of multipurpose mobile computing devices. They are distinguished from feature phones by their stronger hardware capabilities and extensive mobile operating systems”** (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.297).

In today's society, EFL learners are growing up in a digital world. Outside of instructional circumstances, they spend a significant amount of time on their mobile devices. Because the language of the internet has a significant impact on the users' language, it is essential to do research on such topics and analyze their function in ELL (Ghobadi & Taki, 2018,p.142).

In today's mobile world, mobile devices have quickly become incorporated into many elements of EFL teaching and learning (Huang, et al., 2010, p. 12). Mobile devices are used by both instructors and students for a variety of educational objectives. Furthermore, a variety of English learning applications enable students to practice a range of language skills without considering the time, location, or expense (Kukulska, 2009, p.161).

English language skills **“can be learned more effectively using technological tools”** (Ta'amneh, 2014, p: 88). Smartphone technology plays an essential part in making the learning and teaching of English easier. **“The EFL teachers almost have good behavior in learning English through mobile devices. Besides, they believe that M-learning can support learning English effectively through a high percentage of scales”** (Vo and Vo, 2020:117).

According to Huang et al, (2010,p.13) learning with the help of mobiles applications can enable students not only learning the textbook materials suitably but also communicate with others collaboratively anytime and anywhere they would like to. Technology-based mobile learning is more beneficial for activities outside of the classroom. These activities allow learning to be more closely linked to real-world experiences.

In learning English, Using smartphones improved opportunities for teachers and students to enhance learning and modify their learning styles by using cellphones (West, 2012).They might be advantageous to pupils in a variety of ways (Wail and Omaid, 2020, p.233). Smartphone learning was efficient and well-organized due to the features of smartphone learning, which relied on communication with peers and instructors both within and outside the classroom (Gangaiamaran and Pasupathi, 2017, p.264; Klimova, 2019, p. 66).

The global trend toward mobile device learning applications has prompted academics to investigate the use of mobile apps in English language learning. Because to the widespread use of mobile technology, learning may take place at any time and in any location, even if teachers and students are not physically or temporally present. Despite its widespread availability and proximity to the majority of people, we have yet to reap the benefits of its educational influence. Most learners, even children, have mobile devices, therefore we must take advantage of their increased availability to move away from traditional teaching and learning methods (Ozer, and Kılıç, 2018).

## 2.2. Previous Studies

Elfeky and Masadeh's (2016) research attempted to see how Mobile Learning, a type of E-learning that utilises mobile devices, affected the academic accomplishment and conversational abilities of English language speciality students at Najran University. The study employed a quasi-experimental design. The participants were (50) students enrolled in "Strategies of Teaching and Learning", a course given by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the College of Education to students majoring in English at the College of Science and Arts' Department of English Language. The findings revealed that mobile learning has a substantial impact on students' academic progress as well as their conversational abilities. In the light of these findings, faculty members were recommended to adopt the use of Mobile learning in their classes.

The influence of mobile phones on pupils' English language acquisition was investigated by Nalliveettil and Alenazi (2016). At Aljouf University in Saudi Arabia, a field research was done on fifty-two undergraduate male students majoring in English language and literature. A student self-report and a teacher questionnaire were used in the data gathering process. The study's findings are important for EFL instructors and academics who want to introduce new approaches and resources to the English classroom.

Dashti and Aldashti (2015) also conducted a study on "students' perceptions toward the use of mobile learning at the College of Basic Education in Kuwait," in which they distributed 300 questionnaires to female students and discovered that 80.3 percent were satisfied with using mobile devices as a learning tool, and that mobile learning improved their English language knowledge (Dashti and Aldashti, 2015). Nassuora (2013) performed another study in Saudi Arabia to assess students' acceptability of mobile learning. Using a questionnaire survey of 80 students, the author discovered that Saudi Arabia's acceptability of m-learning is strong at the higher education level (Nassuora, 2013).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

The participants of the study were (60) female students at AL-Motamizeen fifth grade Secondary School for Girls, the scientific branch, during the first course of the academic year 2021/2022. The randomly chosen sample was divided into two groups: Group (A) consisted of 35 learners as an experimental group who used smart phones, and group (B) consisted of 35 learners as a control group used the regular communicative method.

### 3.2. Instruments

#### 3.2.1. The test

The pre- testing was administered on the sample of the study for both groups. She used a comfortable room in AL-Motamizeen secondary school so as to be suitable for pupils number (60). To avoid ambiguity, the test instructions are provided in English and then in Arabic once the test papers are distributed. The time it has taken to answer the questions ranged from 30 to 45 minutes. The pre-test has two goals: the first is to equalize the subjects in the control group with those in the experimental group, and the second is to compare the students' performance scores in the pre-test with those in the post-test.

The learners in the control and experimental groups were post-tested at the end of the instruction time. The test was conducted using the same testing techniques. The researcher conducted all of the tests with AL-Motamizeen secondary school staff members.

An achievement test consisting of four questions was used. The test contains two parts: a recognition test and a production test. This test as a whole is considered objective. This type of test regarded more reliable, accurate, more suitable for testing four skills. The material of the study was the pre scribed text-book which was adopted by the Ministry of Education in Iraq for secondary schools. Before the study began, the researcher administered a comparable

performance test to the control and experimental groups to establish their equivalence; it was also utilized as a post-test.

### 3.2.1.1 Validity and Reliability of the test

The test's questions were presented to a jury of experts for examination in order to determine the test's face validity. The jurors are requested to verify whether the questionnaire items are appropriate, partially appropriate, or not appropriate, and to change, add, or replace anything in the test that they do not find appropriate. The jury member's comments and revisions were carefully evaluated by the researcher. The proportion of jury members that agreed with the questionnaire was (88 %).

Next to validity, reliability is another important characteristic of evaluating results. The test-retest methodology is one of the techniques that may be used to determine test reliability. Scores were determined after testing and re-testing within two weeks to determine the test's reliability. The reliability coefficient of the test was calculated using Person's formula (0.83). Any test's reliability coefficient must be more than (0.05). As a result, the figure (0.83) is regarded a high stability coefficient, indicating that the test as a whole is consistent.

### 3.2.1.2 The Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study is to assist the researcher in testing the questionnaire before it is completed. The researcher can use the pilot study to verify the clarity of the test items, the average time it takes to complete a questionnaire, estimate the discriminating power of each item in the questionnaire, and evaluate the test's reliability.

On December 10th, 2021, a pilot research will be conducted. The researcher chose 60 students from a non-sample study at random for the pilot trial. After that, all of the learners were asked to respond to the questions. In the pilot testing, the total time computed for all learners was between (30 and 45 minutes).

### 3.2.2. The Scale of Attitudes

The questionnaires were developed by the researcher to investigate learners' attitudes regarding Smart Phones, based on Biswas, Roy, and Roy (2020). The questionnaires have a total of 20 items. These items were written in simple, easy-to-understand language.

The Likert scale was defined as a series of items consisting of about an equal set of favorable and unfavorable remarks about an attitude object that was delivered to a group. The respondents were asked to choose from the following options: strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree, or strongly disagree (Olaniyi, 2019). For each item, there were five possible responses. The following was distributed on a five-dimensional Likert scale: (5) degrees for the response (**Strongly Agree**), (4) degrees for the answer (**Agree**), (3) degrees for the answer (**Undecided**), (2) degrees for the answer (**Disagree**), and (1) degree for the answer (**Strongly Disagree**). As a result, the total score for each item on the attitude scale was (5), with the lowest score being (1). In addition, the Correcting Scale mechanism is as follows:

- The attitude is **negative** if the mean score is less than (M 3.5).
- If the average score is (3.5) or higher, the attitude is **positive**.

## 4. Data analysis

The data was collected by the researcher during two weeks. All tests were administered to the samples and collected by the researcher with the assistance of the English teachers in charge of each class. In order to answer and fulfill the study's questions and goals, the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for Microsoft Windows 20.0 was used to analyze data and assess any statistical differences between scores for the (pre/posttest) between the two groups. The influence of Smart Phones on Learners' Proficiency in EFL Education was investigated using an independent sample T-test. For the pre- and post-assessments, one-way between groups (ANOVA) was utilized for the four language skills elements of language

(writing, speaking, reading, and listening). Furthermore, all statistical tests were conducted at the (0.05) level of statistical significance.

#### 4.1 Results of Data Analysis

##### 4.1.1 Question One

**Are there any statistically significant differences in proficiency between the experimental and control groups as a result of using smart phones?**

The statistical analysis showed that the mean scores of the experimental group is compared with that of the control group in the total scores of the post- test and the experimental students performed better than the control students on the post test. in table (1), the experimental students' mean scores in the posttest were (65.06) compared to their scores in the pretest (42.33) and The "T" value (10.198) shows that there is a significant difference between the two groups at the (0.05) level of significance and a degree of freedom (58). This indicates that they developed a lot after applying the experiment through using smart phones.

The differences in scores between the groups were statistically significant with a medium effect, according to the findings. As a result, it may be concluded that the students in the experimental group scored significantly higher on the post-test than those in the control group. Accordingly, using smart phones as an innovated and new method of teaching was better than using the regular communicative method of teaching. At the same time, this reveals the fact that the achievement of pupils taught with using smart phone is superior to that of the pupils taught without using smart phone.

**Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of the Control and Experimental Groups' on the Post-test**

Group	Variable				
	No. of Students	"X" Mean	"S.D" Standard Deviation	"T" value	
				Calculated	Tabulated
<b>Experimental</b>	30	65.06	3.95	10.198	2.000
<b>Control</b>	30	42.33	5.18		

##### 4.1.2 Question Two

**Which of the experimental group's skills (speaking, listening, writing, or reading) improves the most as a result of utilizing smart phones?**

To answer this question, for the pre- and post-assessments, one-way ANOVA was used to compare the four dimensions of language abilities (writing, speaking, reading, and listening). (see Tables 2).

**Table (2) Summary of One-way ANOVA for four language skills on the post-test**

skills		Mean Scores	Std. Deviation	F	
				Calculated	Tabulated
<b>Writing</b>	experimental Groups	23	1.45	<b>3.12</b>	<b>1.99</b>
	Control Groups	15	1.76		
<b>Speaking</b>	experimental Groups	21	2.22	<b>2.11</b>	
	Control Groups	14	1.72		
<b>Reading</b>	experimental Groups	9	1.53	<b>4.78</b>	
	Control Groups	13	2.40		
<b>Listening</b>	experimental Groups	15	1.72	<b>2.44</b>	
	Control Groups	11	1.48		
<b>Overall</b>	experimental Groups	65	3.95		

skill	Control Groups	42	5.18	3.67	
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Table 2 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the experimental group's post-test performance. This difference demonstrates that utilizing smart phones to teach students the four language skills has a favorable influence on their competence, since the experimental group's mean score is ( $m= 65$ ) and the control group's mean score is ( $m= 42$ ). Table 3 showed that the experimental groups' proficiency had achieved a lot using smart phones. In comparison to the pre-test, the experimental group's mean score increased by 16 on the post-test. On the other hand, significant differences were found in the use of overall four skills, the calculated ( $F$ ) is ( $F = 3.67$ ) and the tabular one is ( $F = 1.99$ ) with the degree of freedom (2/58) at (0.05 level of significant). Table 2 shows that the experimental group's mean post-test score was greater than the control group's. This discrepancy, according to the study, is due to the teaching approach.

#### 4.1.3 Question three

**What are the attitudes of learners on the use of smart phones in English language learning?**

Table (3) indicates the total mean score for the scale of attitude as all is (3.85); standard deviation is (0.19), percentage of mean score is (76.6%). This means that students in the secondary Schools have a positive attitude towards using smart phone in English language.

*Table 3 Students' attitudes towards using smartphone in English language*

No	Items	Mean	Std. D	Attitude
1	Smart phone has assisted my overall English language learning	4.65	0.76	Positive
2	It is better to plan for my English learning with the smart phone than without it.	4.35	0.54	Positive
3	I find that the use of smartphone has enhanced the learning process.	3.88	0.73	Positive
4	My vocabulary acquisition has increased because the use of text messages written in English.	3.78	0.84	Positive
5	My vocabulary acquisition has increased due to the use of smart phone dictionary.	3.66	0.23	Positive
6	I find it easy to write and receive text- messages in English.	3.90	0.98	Positive
7	My motivation has been enhanced by using smart phone inside and outside the classroom.	4.17	0.54	Positive
8	I believe that using smart phone in learning English is very effective in the time of educational crises.	4.60	0.32	Positive
9	My motivation has been enhanced by the use of smartphone in and outside the classroom.	4.19	0.41	Positive
10	Smartphone has helped me to learn English anywhere.	3.55	0.71	Positive
11	Smartphone has helped me to learn English anytime.	4.76	0.64	Positive
12	Smartphone has enabled students to read English novels	3.24	0.34	Positive
13	Smartphone has enabled students to read English books.	3.54	0.88	Positive
14	Students need smartphones necessarily in learning process due to the spread of Corona virus.	4.99	0.75	Positive
15	Smartphone makes students able to update their information constantly	2.15	0.89	Negative

16	Smartphone has enabled students to pronounce English words correctly.	3.69	0.23	Positive
17	Smartphone has enabled students to speak English accurately.	2.11	0.76	Negative
18	I find it easy to use smartphone in learning process during the time of closing schools	3.66	0.57	Positive
19	Smartphone has enabled students to communicate with colleague mates in English.	4.30	0.63	Positive
20	I think that Smartphone help students to spell English words correctly.	4.86	0.83	Positive
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.85</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>Positive</b>

## 5. Conclusion

Smartphones are becoming increasingly important in today's society, and aside from their broad usage for communication and socializing, they have great promise for improving language proficiency. In this light, and in order to cover a research gap in the Slovak field of English language learning, the current study looked into Iraqi EFL learners' opinions regarding the use of smartphones in their English language learning.

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

1. Using smart phones to teach was more effective than using a traditional method.
2. Using smart phones in teaching proficiency is proved to be one of the best tools which gives opportunities for language learners to interact and develop their skills outside/inside classrooms. Learners' proficiency was developed a lot through using this new technology that was smart phones.
3. Results indicated that students proved to have positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of using the smart phones in English language learning
4. The findings of this study back up the theory that using a smart phone as a leading EFL strategy is good.
5. The outcomes Smart phone technology has had an influence in education, particularly in language learning and teaching, since it makes instruction more interactive, enjoyable, engaging, and successful.
6. The findings show that smart phones can increase students' motivation and confidence in utilizing the English language, as well as help EFL students with language acquisition.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researchers recommended:

1. It is recommended to use smart phones in most classes, in teaching proficiency. Accordingly, the researcher recommends using this new method to develop other language skills which are not investigated yet. Ministries of education and higher education should equip schools and universities with laboratories provided with different types of technology which can be regarded as authentic material to give learners a chance to develop their learning.
2. Using smart phones and E-learning methodologies to learn English.
3. Curriculum designers must take into account the nature of utilizing smart phones and give a range of ways and strategies in which students may engage through web-based learning resources in the English language curriculum.
4. Providing students with the appropriate contemporary technology, such as sufficient computers, interactive smart boards, multimedia materials, and Internet connectivity, to properly use smart phones.



5. To conduct a study of the effectiveness of using smart phones in other stages/ levels of learning: primary, intermediate, college levels.
6. A similar study may be conducted in other secondary school for both males and females.

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