

UTM Arab Students` Usage for English Vocabulary Mobile Applications

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to highlight the Arab students at UTM and their preferences for English vocabulary mobile apps (EVMA) and to identify the reasons for choosing the selected app as the best preferences of Arab students in the university. Among hundreds of EVMA in Google Play store, a list of the top 20 applications for the current study has been compiled. There are 39 Arab students participated in this study and the quantitative approach was applied through the online questionnaire to targeted and pre-defined groups. The questionnaire was collected for their feedback and opinions. Through the analysis of the questionnaire, the best five apps suitable for teaching of English vocabulary to the university level were identified. After the mobile app was selected by the participants, Duolingo app was the highest and best applied among the respondents to learn English vocabulary. The overall findings of the study indicated that more than half of the Arab students in the university prefer to use mobile software to learn vocabulary. The application is popular among English speakers who are not native speakers for a variety of reasons, including attractive interface and design, ease of use, multitasking, lessons and diversity of activities and skills.

Keywords: *English Vocabulary App, TESOL, Non-English Speakers, Mobile Learning*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is an international language that is spread in almost all countries of the world (Seth, 2007). Because of its use in business and study, which is one of the means of global communication and diplomacy among peoples in the world. Baugh (1993) stated in his book history of the English language that English is defined as a Western language of the Old Germanic language, which has evolved over time due to the use of many dialects spoken with it. This has contributed to the addition of a set of new vocabulary and syntax, also English language continues to evolve until this time in conjunction with the global developments in many of diverse fields (Arabic Encyclopedia, 1999).

One of the smart systems in the education process is the use of ICTs. It is possible to employ this technology in the classroom or the public to raise the level of learning and eliminate illiteracy without having to resort to the traditional system, which is the educational institution represented by the school (Brian, 2016). Moreover, teaching and learning English vocabularies in the appropriate way and well-defined manner are very important for all learners and teachers and indispensable

in in improving English proficiency and development of four skill.

The traditional role in teaching the vocabulary of English is no longer suited to the existing life in the age of technology, and the most problematic is the difficulty of dealing with the vocabulary of the English language in the correct form and the best understanding of the meaning. In this sense, finding alternatives to teach English vocabulary and integrate it with technological standards became a necessity Massive and urgent need. Therefore, there are many technological sectors specialized in education have been established to develop the method of teaching and learning in accordance with the era of technological and technical revolution, and from this basis can help modern technology in all forms in the establishment of an educational model specializes in facilitating the learning of the vocabulary of the English language.

1.1. Background of the study

Most significant portable specialist organizations convey an Android gadget. From Q2 of 2009 to the second quarter of 2010, Android's overall piece of the pie rose 850% from 1.8% to 17.2%. On 15 November 2011,

Android achieved 52.5% of the worldwide Cell phone piece of the overall industry (Misdianto, 2014).

Studies have shown that the use of mobile phones as a tool for self-learning is effective and highly feasible, specifically when it can be used at any time and any place instead of adhering to certain conditions such as time (only during class hours) or place (only in the classroom) (Chinnery, 2006; Hwang & Chang, 2011; Hwang & Tsai, 2011; Hwang, Chu, Lin, & Tsai, 2011; Hwang, Shi, & Chu, 2011). Therefore, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners could use effective learning tools to facilitate their vocabulary learning. (Chen, C. M., & Chung, C. J. (2008). English language vocabulary mobile apps contain many features that facilitate vocabulary learning, but many are not designed to suit learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) (Drew & Hasselgreen, 2008).

In terms of the basic rules of e-learning and special characteristics needed by the learner, unlike other students of the second language (ESL), several studies showed to the scarcity of mobile phone applications that can be included in the educational systems in countries where the English is considered as a foreign language. The Arab countries are at the forefront of countries that lack the mobile phone applications which could help them to learn English vocabulary as a foreign language.

1.2. Purpose of Study

This study aims to contribute in this area by studying the use of EVLMA as an English vocabulary teaching tools in schools, universities and for people who is interested in learning English vocabulary to improve their English proficiency. Through my experience as a teacher of English. In some areas of Palestine and Arab countries there are a clear failure of using modern technologies such as EVLMA by teachers and education centers to improve and enhance the English vocabulary acquisition. One of the objectives of this study will specifically look at the Arab learners` preferences of EVLMA and the preferred EVLMA to enhance their English vocabulary acquisition also the pedagogical techniques employed by teachers in implementation.

1.3. Research Questions

The main questions of this research are: (1) What are the Arab student learner`s usage and needs of EVLMA, (2) What is the select apps that could fulfill the needs and preferences of Arab learners?

2. METHOD

The research process is the step-by-step procedure of developing the research. It involves identifying, locating, accessing, analysing, and then developing and expressing ideas (Williams, 2013). To exhibit the general view of the

process steps for the current research, Figure 1 shows the flow chart research process steps that were followed in the current study.

The research process started with the important initial phase of the research where the research problem was identified from related literature based on the research topic. The second phase focused on the survey, and based on the literature review, after that the research was designed, after that, the survey design which is including two parts: questionnaire and interview and empirically (pilot study) that will be the outcome with a final survey instrument.

Data were collected and analysed. For investigating the Arab usage and preferences of mobile apps to learn English vocabulary, the mixed-methods approach is used to figure out an important and exactly result. Mixed methods research is a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analysing and integrating quantitative (e.g., experiments, surveys) and qualitative (e.g., focus groups, interviews) research. This approach to research is used when this integration provides a better understanding of the research problem than either of each alone.

The scope of this study is a set of Arab students in UTM, a total of 39 respondents. The specific number of the sample is based on the small size of available Arab population who are familiar with using English mobile phone apps in UTM. These students speak and learn English as a second language and most of them did not practice their Academic skills and language before they come to continue their studies in Malaysia. Respondents from different majors, faculties, countries and genders participated in this study in an effort to show how their study activities could be enriched, along with the acquisition of further data, which could lead to better results.

When designing the instrument survey, it is recommended that items are derived from original measurements, which have been applied in previous research areas and models. This helps enhance validity (Agarwal, 2011), To achieve the objectives of the study, such as answering questions, the researcher used the questionnaire as a reference, content analysis, individual interview and group interview. The questionnaire was suitable for the generous size of the society, as a distribution and dissemination tool.

Questions are categorized as closed-ended and open ended. Structured questions require respondents to choose an answer from a certain set of choices. Structured questions are usually used and propagated for a composite scale or index for statistical analysis. On other hand, unstructured questions require respondents to extract more information and details. The diversity of questions is intended to gather as much information as possible from the respondents. The questionnaire,

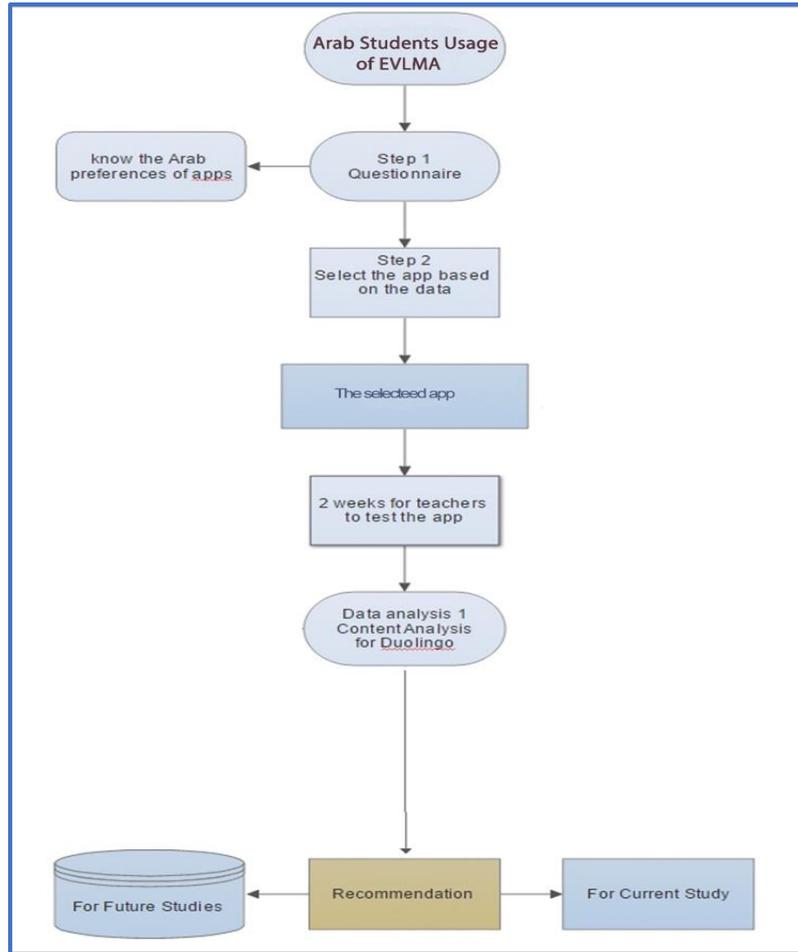


Figure 1 Research Procedures

consisting of 24 closed-ended and opened ended questions, will be distributed online to be answered by the students. The questionnaire is adopted from case study (Rezaei & Mai, 2013). This study employed structured and unstructured questions, because the questions needed to be planned in such a way that respondents were able to read, comprehend and react to them meaningfully (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

The online questionnaire is created and conducted by Google Forms, which allows many features in the analysis list and faster in distribution, collection and accuracy in targeting the category of the questionnaire. In addition, the WhatsApp service is invested in collecting samples, which are difficult to find manually in UTM university. The questionnaire distributed by WhatsApp groups and intended for Arab students studying in UTM. Thus, the sample population is limited.

Three different analyses use survey data: descriptive analysis, measurement model analysis and reviewing analysis. The questionnaire samples collected from the samples. The questionnaire data also are collected and analysed depend on the questions covered in the questionnaire. All data analyzed quantitative such as questionnaire which will be collected from 39 students.

The data and information collected are responses and feedback, which are reviewed by the respondents in the questionnaire. They reflect their personal and professional opinion based on the questions listed in tools. Descriptive analysis, such as frequency and percentage of demographic data are evaluated in the first section. Then discusses the findings obtained from the analysis.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Descriptive Demographic Statistics

Descriptive statistics exhibits the basic characteristics feature of the study sample. A manual method was used to analyze the descriptive statistics. Table 1 shows the frequencies and percentages of the demographic variables: gender, age, course program, academic semester, nationality, income and place of residence (see Table 1).

As shown in Table 1, Gender composed of male and female. Out of 39 respondents, 33 were males (84.6%) and 6 were females (15.4%). The college students in the

case study had to be 18 or more than 18 years, there were 29 respondents aged 18-20 (23.1%), 14 respondents aged

The online questionnaire was created by Google Forms tools, which allows many features in the analysis

Table 1. Descriptive Demographic Statistics

Var	Items	Freq	%	Var.	Items	Freq.	%
Gender	Male	33	84.6	Nationality	Local	0	0
	Female	6	15.4		Foreigner	39	100
Age	less than 18	0	0	Academic semester	First sem.	12	30.7
	18-20	9	23.1		Second sem.	6	15.4
	21-29	14	35.9		Third sem.	5	12.8
	30-39	12	30.8		Fourth sem.	4	10.3
	40-49	4	10.3		Fifth sem.	8	20.5
	50-55	0	0		Sixth sem.	4	10.3
	Others	0	0				
Course program	PHD program	15	38.5				
	Master program	7	17.9				
	Bachelor program	14	36				
	Foundation program	3	7.6				
	Diploma program	0	0				

21-29 (35.9%), 12 respondents aged 30-39 (30.8%), 4 respondents aged 40-49 (10.3%).

The course program comprised of 5 categories: PHD program comprised 15 respondents (38.5% of the respondents). Master program comprised 7 respondents (17.9% of the respondents). Bachelor program comprised 14 respondents (36% of the respondents). Foundation program comprised 3 respondents (7.6% of the respondents). Finally, Diploma program comprised 0 respondents (00.0% of the respondents).

3.2. Usage of EVLMA among Arab students learning English

A questionnaire was used to answer the first question, which is focused on the EVLMA preferences and usage of Arab students. The questionnaire is a research tool that collects the required information and data required for study by the respondents. It consists of several questions divided into groups and other forms. The questionnaire can be a paper or an electronic forum accessed by the respondents via computer and mobile device (Fraley, Waller & Brennan, 2000).

An open and closed questions listed in the questionnaire to be answered by the 39 respondents, the diversity of questions is intended to gather as much information as possible from the respondents. If the questions were short, the questionnaire would be easy, but the information collected would not suffice to analyze the samples. But the researcher deliberately added some open-ended questions to obtain much more additional information, and enough to provide some excitement and enthusiasm to the answer.

list such as graphs, figures and tables. Therefore, this would help in speed up the distribution, collection and accuracy in targeting the category of the questionnaire. In addition, the WhatsApp service was invested in collecting samples, which are difficult to find manually in UTM university. The questionnaire was distributed within the WhatsApp groups and intended for Arab students studying at the UTM university, Thus, the sample population was limited. The Table 2 shows some types of questions are used in questionnaire.

3.3. Arab Students` preferences among EVLM apps

A direct and explicit question was included in the questionnaire which is (Which of the following apps do you have on your device? What kind of applications do you use the most?). It has been followed by dozens of famous English language vocabulary applications around the world such as (Duolingo, busuu, Memrise, LearnEnglish Grammar, Learn English with Babbel, mprove English: Word Games, Rosetta Stone, Mango Languages and others). The data collected by the respondents went in two different directions as shown in Figures 2.

The first response and direction we received from the questionnaire was accurate and clear based on the objective understanding of the question, which shows that 11 respondents have chosen the famous English language learning app Duolingo. Duolingo app followed immediately by Learn English Grammar app which was selected by 8 respondents, this response comes on the basis of a subjective understanding of the significance of

Table 2. Types of questions used in questionnaire

Type of question	Sample	Answer
Closed questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Personal information questions. 2. Are you interested in an English learn mobile apps? 3. Have you ever downloaded English apps for your device? 4. What time you use these applications? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name, age, 2. Yes / No 3. Yes / No 4. Daily, Weekly...
Open Questions	Short answer: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your permanent place of residence (Your country)? 2. Do you recommend and English mobile apps, please tell us? 3. What is the primary purpose of your English mobile app usage? Long answer: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using English vocabulary mobile apps helps me access additional info, outside of using my textbooks, is this true? Why? 2. Do you feel more confident when using English vocabulary mobile apps in learning and classroom other than textbook? How? 3. Some researchers said that learning English vocabulary through English mobile apps is more practical, accessible and much materials but others said learning via website it better. Who do you agree and why? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Palestine 2. Yes, like No,.... Why... 3. Learning 1. Yes, this is true because No, this is not.... (Why) because 2. Yes, I did buy using mobile apps I can No, I don't 3. I do not agree, and I see that website is more I do agree, because ...
Evaluated questions	In this type of question, the respondent gives his assessment in numbers such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The flexibility of picking up activities and doing them on my own time and preferred environment, help me to be more confident during my English class. 2. How likely are you to recommend these apps (27 app mentioned in questionnaire) to others? 	From 1 to 5 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: Do not recommend at all 2: Do not recommend 3: Recommend 4: Slightly recommend 5: Strongly recommend From 1 to 5 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1: Do not recommend at all 2: Do not recommend 3: Recommend 4: Slightly recommend 5: Strongly recommend

the questionnaire, which focuses on learning the vocabulary of English language by mobile apps.

The second response was surprising that Google Translate has received the highest percentage between EVLMA. It got about 32 responses. This app has been included in the apps` list based on the prior knowledge that most Arab students use Google translate app for translation in their daily life significantly. If we can say that, 32 responses from respondents to Google's translate app were made by general understanding of English language learning rather than based on the characteristics of the app or these 32 responses were produced based on the popularity of the app in academic and day-to-day use of students at the university.

To clarify it more, 32 respondents were chosen Google translate app as the first app to learn English vocabulary for daily and academic life. This app provides the translation property from the native language to several other languages only. As it supports the acquisition of vocabulary only through translation, so this is a very advanced level of learners without including any other type of activities, skills, lessons and features that allow the learner variety ways of acquiring vocabulary as in Duolingo. Based on the app which designed and prepared to learn English vocabulary in terms of the features such as activities, skills, methods, and provided lesson. Duolingo has chosen as a selected app to be analyzed and practiced.

3.4. Selected App to Fulfill the Needs of Arab Learners

Within more than 20 English vocabulary apps listed many apps have got high rank and the rest of the applications of learning English language vocabulary has also received votes but in an unclear and frank way such as Mosalingua gained 6 responses, AccellaStudy Essential Apps 7 responses, Learn English Grammar 8 responses, Hello English 7 responses, Vocabulary.com 6 responses and Learn English daily 7 responses. We conclude from the above data that the application of Duolingo has obtained the second highest votes as a designed and prepared app for learning English vocabulary and responses from among more than 20 applications. This means that there is something special in this application that attracts foreign learners especially UTM Arab learners to experience it and acquire it on their own mobile.

4. CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to identify the most suitable English vocabulary mobile android app for Arab Student in UTM university as a foreign language speaker, based on all the available mobile android applications from the Google play, the researcher listed the best android application concerning in teaching English vocabulary and match the foreign language learner especially the Arab. Since Arab learner travel a lot to obtain degrees from a foreign country which speak

English. There was an urgent need to learn the vocabulary of English so that they could communicate effectively with others. Mobile applications enabled them to get what they wanted through the many applications that meet their needs. English vocabulary mobile android application is one of the thousands of applications that are built for users to learn.

After a lengthy search for English language applications in the Google Play engine the researcher found hundreds of applications that are interested in learning English. But not all of them are subject to the standards required by the target sample. Approximately 20 mobile apps concern in English language vocabulary have achieved the highest scores in the assessment and have been included in the plan to present them to the target sample for the referendum by questionnaire.

To achieve the study's objective. The first objective was to define the preferences of Arab students in English language vocabulary applications in UTM. To find out about these preferences and to answer this goal, an online questionnaire created by Google forms was used and distributed for 39 respondents to obtain the necessary information about their preferences, the information gathered from the respondents was analyzed and it was found that Duolingo application was one of the best applications nominated by the respondents to win the first order, the respondents explained that the main factors in selecting this application is interface, content, ease of command and navigation.

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