



## Exploring the Use of Smartphones in Learning English language by EFL Sabha University Students: practices, attitudes and challenges

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### Key words:

The use of smartphone  
EFL University students  
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Practice  
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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of smartphones in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms among Libyan students at Sebha University, focusing on their attitudes, practices, and the challenges they encounter. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design, employing a quantitative questionnaire and qualitative semi-structured interviews. The participants consisted of 50 EFL undergraduate students from different semesters in the Department of English at Sebha University, who were randomly selected. The findings reveal that Libyan EFL students generally hold positive attitudes toward the use of smartphones in English language learning. Students reported noticeable improvement in their learning experiences due to the flexibility and accessibility that smartphones provide. They indicated that smartphones facilitate various learning practices, such as watching English videos, using dictionary and vocabulary applications, listening to audio materials, and engaging in online communication with teachers, all of which contribute to enhancing their English language skills. Despite these benefits, several challenges were identified, including distractions caused by social media, small screen sizes, and the high cost of internet access. However, most participants indicated that these challenges only slightly affected their learning process. Overall, the results suggest that smartphones can serve as an effective and valuable tool for EFL learning when accompanied by proper technological awareness, appropriate application selection, and strategies to minimize potential challenges. The study concludes with practical recommendations for EFL teachers on integrating smartphone use effectively in English language classrooms, particularly to support listening and speaking skills through audio-based activities.

استكشاف استخدام الهواتف الذكية في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية لدى طلاب جامعة سبها قسم اللغة الإنجليزية: الممارسات، الاتجاهات، والتحديات

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### الكلمات المفتاحية:

استخدام الهواتف الذكية  
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تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية  
الممارسات  
الاتجاهات  
المواقف  
التحديات

### المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء استخدام الهواتف الذكية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) لدى الطلاب الليبيين في جامعة سبها، مع التركيز على اتجاهاتهم، وممارساتهم، والتحديات التي يواجهونها. اعتمدت الدراسة منهج البحث المختلط، حيث تم استخدام استبيان كمي ومقابلات شبه منظمّة نوعية. وتكوّنت عينة الدراسة من 50 طالبًا جامعيًا يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية في مراحل دراسية مختلفة بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة سبها، وتم اختيارهم عشوائيًا. أظهرت النتائج أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في ليبيا يمتلكون اتجاهات إيجابية بشكل عام نحو استخدام الهواتف الذكية في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. كما أفاد الطلاب بوجود تحسّن ملحوظ في خبراتهم التعليمية نتيجة لما توفره الهواتف الذكية من مرونة وسهولة في الوصول إلى مصادر التعلم. وأشاروا إلى أن الهواتف الذكية تسهل العديد من ممارسات التعلم، مثل مشاهدة مقاطع الفيديو باللغة الإنجليزية، واستخدام تطبيقات القواميس والمفردات، والاستماع إلى المواد الصوتية، والمشاركة في التواصل الإلكتروني مع المعلمين، مما يساهم في تعزيز مهاراتهم في اللغة الإنجليزية. وعلى الرغم من هذه الفوائد، تم تحديد عدة تحديات، من أبرزها تشتت الانتباه عن وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، وصغر حجم شاشات الهواتف، وارتفاع

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تكلفة خدمة الإنترنت. ومع ذلك، أشار معظم المشاركين إلى أن هذه التحديات كان لها تأثير طفيف فقط على عملية تعلمهم. وبشكل عام، تشير النتائج إلى أن الهواتف الذكية يمكن أن تُعد أداة فعالة وقيمة في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، متى ما اقترن استخدامها بوجود وعي تكنولوجي مناسب، واختيار تطبيقات تعليمية ملائمة، ووضع استراتيجيات للحد من التحديات المحتملة. وتختتم الدراسة بتقديم توصيات عملية لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية حول كيفية دمج استخدام الهواتف الذكية بفاعلية في فصول تعليم اللغة، لا سيما لدعم مهاراتي الاستماع والتحدث من خلال الأنشطة المعتمدة على المواد الصوتية.

## 1. Introduction

Today, English has become the main Language people use to connect with each other around the world, whether in communication, education, or in professional growth. Accordingly, identifying effective methods to enhance English language acquisition is essential for both individual learners and educational institutions.

In recent years, smartphones have become integral to modern education, particularly in language learning. With their multifunctionality and accessibility, smartphones offer learners opportunities to engage in English learning beyond traditional classroom boundaries. The portability, versatility, and connectivity of smartphones make them a valuable tool for both students and educators, enabling learning experiences that extend beyond the limitations of time and space and support continuous access to educational resources (Sisouvang & Pasanchay, 2024). Today's smartphones really have a big impact on students' everyday lives. They're everywhere. Instead of just being a distraction, students can actually use them to their advantage—like improving their language skills. Smartphone use has been reported to support students' learning by enhancing communication and collaboration, improving access to digital resources, and promoting self-regulated learning when appropriately integrated into educational settings (Li et al., 2022). Looking into these different areas, this study aims to give a full picture of how smartphones influence learning English and to suggest ways to students to practice better in classrooms In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), mobile devices enable learners to practice and improve language skills through applications, online dictionaries, and interactive platforms that foster flexible, accessible, and learner-centered language learning environments (Burston, 2023).

It builds on earlier research, as recent studies highlight the considerable potential of mobile learning in enhancing language learning through flexible access, interactive engagement, and increased learner autonomy across different learning contexts (Hwang & Fu, 2022). But it also tackles current issues, like making these technologies work smoothly in real-world teaching settings. Besides, smartphones, as globally connected devices, provide extensive and unique opportunities for student learning. They enable access to a wide range of educational resources, including language learning applications, multimedia content, and interactive digital platforms. These tools support diverse learning styles and needs, enhancing learner engagement and autonomy. Recent studies confirm that mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) significantly improves language skills and promotes flexible, personalized learning environments (Stockwell, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Unlike traditional learning methods, smartphones enable learners to engage with language learning materials anytime and anywhere, offering flexibility that extends beyond the limitations of the classroom. This accessibility supports self-directed and self-paced learning, allowing learners to manage their own progress and learning strategies more effectively. Recent research confirms that mobile-assisted language learning promotes learner autonomy and continuous learning across different contexts (Zhang & Pérez-Paredes, 2022)

### 1.1 problem statement:

Although that university students use their smartphone every day for many purposes, their potential as effective tools for learning English is still largely overlooked among EFL Libyan university students. While some students use smartphones for academic purpose such as using language learning apps, others use them for entertainment or use them for social interaction. This mixed usage raises some

important questions about how are being integrated to learn a language or develop a language skill and what attitude students hold. This study discovers how EFL students utilize smartphones to learn English, focusing on their everyday practices, their attitudes, and challenges they face.

### 1.2 Research questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions by knowing students' practice, attitude and challenges at Sabha University.

Q1/ How do Sabha EFL university students use smartphones in their English language learning and how much time do they spend per a day?

Q2/ What are the students' attitudes toward using smartphones for learning English?

Q3/ What challenges do students face while using smartphones for language learning?

### 1.3 Aims of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore how EFL university students use of smartphones in learning English, focusing on their practices, attitudes, and the challenges they encounter at Sabha university. By discovering these tools, students will recommend opinions to make mobile learning fairer and more effective for all students.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is important since it explores the meaningful role of smartphones in supporting English language learning among EFL university students. As mobile devices have become a common part of students' daily lives, understanding their potential in education is crucial. The study highlights students' real practises — including their attitudes, challenges, and ways of using smartphones to learn English. In addition, the study offers practical recommendations for teachers and educational planners to integrate smartphones into language teaching, helping to form more attractive, flexible, and interactive learning settings.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and its role (MALL)

Developments in technology have reshaped language education, making learning more interactive and independent. Smartphones (MALL), with their numerous applications, enable learners to practice vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and listening skills. Besides, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has gained increasing popularity in EFL contexts due to its accessibility and flexibility, enabling learners to study anytime and anywhere. Recent studies indicate that students benefit from a wide range of mobile applications and digital platforms that support vocabulary development, interactive practice, and autonomous learning (Zhang & Zou, 2022; Burston, 2023). Therefore, the significance of this study is significant—it helps students to understand how smartphones can support learning English, which is such a key skill in today's interconnected world.

### 2.2 Attitudes Toward Smartphone Use in Learning

Students' attitudes toward using smartphones for learning have been widely examined in recent research, particularly in the field of language acquisition. Studies indicate that learners generally hold positive attitudes toward mobile learning due to its flexibility, accessibility, and engaging nature. Smartphones enable students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere, which supports more autonomous and personalized learning experiences. This flexibility allows learners to adapt their study habits according to their individual needs and schedules, thereby enhancing motivation and engagement (Zhang & Zou, 2022).

Moreover, smartphone use has been shown to influence learners' personal experiences, as well as their interaction within educational and social contexts. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) environments encourage continuous practice and facilitate interaction through digital platforms, which contributes to improving language skills and learner confidence (Hwang & Fu, 2022). Understanding students' attitudes is essential, as these perceptions directly affect the adoption and effective integration of mobile technologies in education.

In addition, students tend to enjoy learning through short, interactive, and gamified activities provided by mobile applications, which make the learning process more engaging and manageable. Such features enhance learners' sense of control over their learning process and promote self-directed learning (Burston, 2023).

However, despite these advantages, some challenges remain. Recent research highlights concerns related to distraction, overuse of smartphones, and dependence on technology, which may negatively affect learning outcomes if not properly managed (Chen, 2023). Furthermore, technical limitations such as internet connectivity issues and device constraints can also influence students' willingness and ability to effectively use smartphones for learning (Alamri, 2024).

### 2.3 Challenges in Smartphones usage

While smartphones and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) offer significant benefits, several challenges may hinder their effective use in educational contexts. These challenges can be categorized as follows:

#### 1. Distractions and Reduced Focus:

Smartphones may expose learners to non-educational content such as social media and entertainment applications, which can negatively affect attention and learning outcomes. Recent studies highlight that increased mobile use may lead to cognitive overload and reduced academic focus if not properly regulated (Chen, 2023).

#### 2. Overdependence and Health Concerns:

Excessive reliance on smartphones can contribute to issues such as eye strain, poor posture, and reduced face-to-face interaction. Research emphasizes the importance of balancing mobile learning with other instructional methods to support students' well-being (Alamri, 2024).

#### 3. Digital Divide:

Inequality in access to smartphones, reliable internet, and digital resources remains a major barrier, particularly in developing regions. This digital divide can limit equal participation in mobile learning environments (UNESCO, 2023).

#### 4. Privacy and Security:

The use of mobile applications raises concerns about data privacy and the protection of personal information. Learners may be at risk if educational technologies do not ensure adequate security measures (OECD, 2022).

#### 5. Lack of Teacher Training:

Many educators still lack sufficient training and support to effectively integrate smartphones into teaching practices. This limitation reduces the potential benefits of mobile-assisted learning in classrooms (Hwang & Fu, 2022).

#### 6. Quality Control and Content Overload:

The vast number of mobile learning applications and resources can overwhelm learners, and not all available tools are pedagogically effective. Selecting high-quality, reliable content is essential for maximizing learning outcomes (Burston, 2023).

### 3. Methodology

A mixed-methods research design was employed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how EFL students at Sebha University use smartphones in their English language learning. This approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for triangulation and increasing the validity and reliability of the findings. The study sample consisted of 50 EFL Libyan students enrolled in the English Department at Sebha University during the 2022/2023 academic year. Participants were selected randomly and represented academic levels ranging from the first to the eighth semester. Both male and female students aged 18 to 24 years were included. Two instruments were used for data collection: a questionnaire and

semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was adapted from Shaharane (2016) and revised to match the context of Sebha University. It contained three main sections addressing students' practices, attitudes, and challenges related to smartphone use in English language learning. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items as well as open-ended questions to obtain both numerical and descriptive data. To complement the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive subsample of 10 students. These participants were randomly selected and based on their willingness to elaborate further on their experiences with smartphone-assisted language learning. The interviews aimed to explore students' personal perceptions and provide deeper insights into the benefits, limitations, and practical uses of smartphones in learning English.

#### 3.1 Data collection procedures:

1. Questionnaire Administration: The questionnaire was distributed to all 50 participants. The target students were informed about the study's purpose and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Participation was voluntary, and consent was obtained prior to data collection. The data were collected throughout the questionnaire and was as designed after reviewing and testing and then editing according to the setting and the nature of current study. A pilot tested was applied after the questionnaire checked by professors. This questionnaire had 4 main sections. The purpose of this research is to discover the role of smartphones uses in learning English language skills at Sebha University.

2. Interview Sessions: Based on questionnaire responses, 10 students were purposively selected for interviews to ensure a diverse representation of experiences. Each interview lasted around 10 to 12 minutes and took place in a quiet setting that encourage open discussion. A qualitative analysis was used to understand the interview analyzed.

#### 3.2 Data analysis procedures:

##### A. Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics—including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations—were calculated to summarize students' practices, attitudes, and challenges regarding smartphone use in learning English.

Items measured on a 5-point Likert scale were analyzed to determine the overall direction and strength of students' attitudes. In addition, responses to the closed-ended questions were converted into numerical values and presented in descriptive statistical tables for clarity. Open-ended responses in the questionnaire were categorized and summarized to identify common patterns related to challenges and perceived benefits.

##### B. Qualitative Analysis

To further explore students' experiences with smartphone-assisted English learning, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten randomly selected participants. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving coding, categorizing, and identifying recurring themes.

The analysis revealed four main themes:

Enhanced Engagement and Motivation – Students reported that smartphone applications made learning more interactive and enjoyable.

Practical Challenges – Distractions from social media and occasional technical issues were noted as barriers.

Self-Directed Learning – Participants highlighted that smartphone enabled them to control their learning pace and access resources independently.

Collaborative Opportunities – Some students used apps and platforms to practice English with peers, promoting communication and interaction.

These findings provide a nuanced understanding of students' practices and perceptions, complementing the quantitative data and illustrating the multifaceted impact of smartphones on English language learning.

#### 3.3. Limitations

The study may be limited by the sample size and the specific context

in which it is conducted (e.g., university students and language centers). Additionally, the data collected may reflect only the attitudes of the sample population and may not be generalizable to all contexts. The reliance on self-report measures in surveys and interviews may also introduce biases, as participants may provide socially desirable responses.

**4. Results:**

**4.1 The questionnaire results**

This study is based on a quantitative and qualitative methods. The participants' answers were statically analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages, and frequently) to identify trends in smartphone usage, attitudes, and challenges of each questionnaire item calculated using the stactical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data were collected through the questionnaire specifically modified and validated foe the context of this study. A pilot tested was applied after the questionnaire checked by professors. This questionnaire had 4 main sections. The purpose of this research is to discover the role of smartphones uses in learning English language skills at Sebha University.

**The First section: Demographic information:**

Figure 1 presented the demographic characteristics of the participants in the present study. The figure provides a clear overview of the students' gender, age group, and English proficiency level, which are key factors in understanding the background of the research sample. The participants were randomly selected, ensuring a fair representation of the target population. The diversity provides a solid basis for exploring EFL students' practices, attitudes, and challenges related to the use of smartphone in English language learning.

| Demographic variables      | Category          | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
|                            | Male              | 18            | 36%            |
|                            | Female            | 32            | 64%            |
| Age group                  | Under 19-year-old | 6             | 12%            |
|                            | Between 20- 25    | 44            | 88%            |
| English Proficiency Level: | Beginner          | 20            | 40%            |
|                            | Intermediate      | 10            | 20%            |
|                            | Advanced          | 20            | 40%            |

Fig. 1: Demographic profile of participants.

**Section 2: Practices of Smartphone Use in Learning English**

Figure 2 presents the frequency of smartphone use among students for learning English. The results showed that a large number of participants—approximately 47 out of 50—reported that they were using their smartphones on a daily basis to support their English learning. In contrast, only a very small number of students mentioned that they used their smartphones a few times a week, occasionally, or rarely. Notably, none of the participants reported that they never used smartphones for this purpose.

These findings prove that smartphone-assisted learning is deeply integrated into students' daily routines. The sharp difference between the "Daily" category and the other usage levels highlights the central role smartphones play as an accessible and reliable tool for learning English.

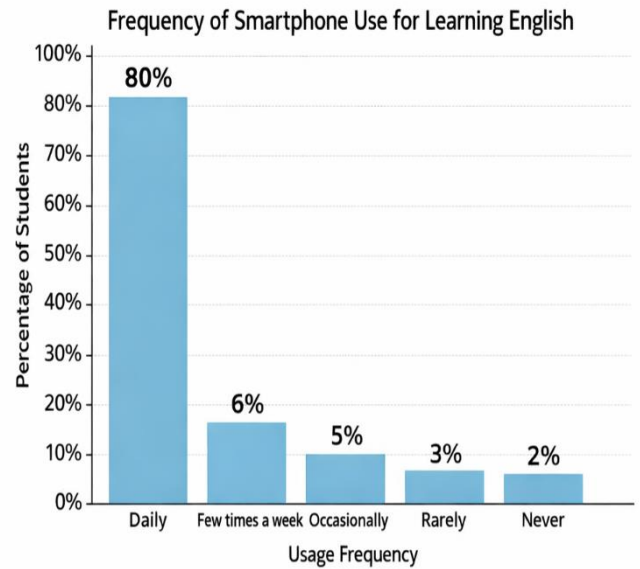


Fig. 2 Distribution of students' smartphone usage frequency for learning English

Further, figure 3 illustrates the specific activities and applications the students engage with during this time, highlighting the most frequency used tools and learning practices. The results show that the enormous majority of participants devote a considerable amount of time to smartphone-based English learning. Specifically, 82% of the students stated spending more than four hours per day, highlighting the central role of smartphones in their language learning practices. In contrast, a smaller number of students reported limited usage. Only 10% of the participants spent 2–4 hours daily, while 6% reported using smartphones for 1–2 hours. A very small percentage (2%) indicated spending less than one hour per day on English learning via smartphones. Overall, these findings suggest that smartphones are heavily integrated into students' daily learning routines and function as a main tool for English language learning. The dominance of extended daily usage reflects students' strong reliance on mobile technology for accessing learning materials, practicing language skills, and engaging with English content.

**Time Spent Daily on English Learning via Smartphor**

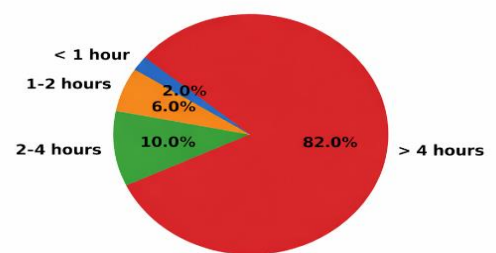
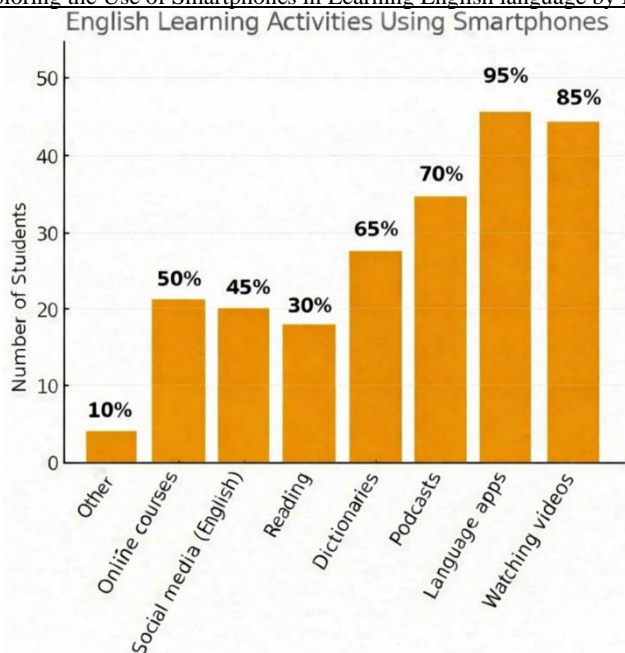


Fig. 3 Daily time spend on English language learning via smartphones

In Meantime, participants were asked about the apps with its activities that they have experienced to learn English on your smartphones. Many options were checked by them and the most effective ones were (the language apps) such as practicing pronunciation, writing skills, listening skills, and speaking skills with more watching channels to overcomes their English weakness. Figure 4 below illustrates the most applications EFL students liked and practiced more. In general, the students were rather to use smartphone for education than other things. The platform used by them in order to support and develop their English language skills.



**Fig. 4** Distribution of English Learning Activities via Smartphone Among EFL students

Finally, an open-ended question was asked at the end of this part which is "which smartphone applications do you find most useful for learning English" and their answers were varied, but mostly they recommend to practice "Hello talk, BBC Learning English, Tandem, and (ELSA) English language speech Assistant, Beeling apps".

### Section 3: Attitudes Toward Smartphone Use in Learning English

What are the students' attitudes toward using smartphones for learning English? To answer the second research question, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS. Means and standard deviations were calculated to examine students' attitudes toward smartphone use in learning English.

The findings reveal that students demonstrated highly positive attitudes toward the use of smartphones as learning tools. In particular, responses to the item "Do you believe a smartphone is an effective tool for learning English?" produced a mean score of 4.6 (SD = 0.50), indicating strong agreement among participants. According to the adopted Likert-scale classification, this score falls within the high attitude range (4.00–5.00), suggesting that students strongly perceive smartphones as effective tools for English language learning.

Regarding the perceived benefits of smartphone use, students reported a range of advantages. However, the majority emphasized that smartphones provide an interactive and engaging learning experience, which enhances vocabulary acquisition, listening practice, and overall learner involvement. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the role of smartphone in promoting learner engagement and autonomy in language learning.

Motivation was also examined through the item "Do you feel more motivated to learn English using a smartphone compared to traditional methods?" The results indicate a high level of motivation among students, with an overall mean score of 4.0. This score confirms that smartphone use positively influences learners' motivation, supporting the assumption that mobile-assisted learning environments can be more stimulating than traditional instructional approaches.

Overall, the results prove that students hold positive and favorable attitudes toward smartphone use in learning English, particularly in terms of effectiveness, engagement, and motivation.

### Section 4: What challenges do students face while using smartphones for learning English?

To address the third research question, students' responses concerning challenges were analyzed using means and standard deviations through SPSS. The findings indicate that students

reported a low level of perceived challenges, with an overall mean score of 2.69 out of 5. According to the predefined ranking scale, this value falls within the low range (1.00–2.70), suggesting that smartphones do not pose major obstacles to English language learning for most students.

Despite the generally low challenge level, some specific difficulties were identified. The most frequently reported challenge was the small screen size, which affects readability and comfort during extended learning sessions. Additionally, a considerable number of students selected the option "Other", implying the presence of additional challenges that may be personal, technical, or application-specific and not explicitly covered in the questionnaire. Limited internet access was reported by 12 students, indicating that connectivity issues and data costs can hinder effective smartphone-based learning. Furthermore, distractions caused by social media and the absence of structured learning programs were each reported by 10 students, indicating challenges related to concentration and instructional organization. Only three students reported difficulties in maintaining self-discipline, suggesting that self-regulation was not a major concern among the participants. Overall, the findings indicate that although students experience some technical and environmental challenges, these issues are relatively minor and do not outweigh the perceived benefits of using smartphones for learning English.

### 4.2 The Interview results

To complement the questionnaire results and gain deeper insights into students' perceptions, semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted with 10 randomly selected EFL students. This qualitative phase aimed to enrich the quantitative findings and provide more detailed explanations of students' experiences with smartphone English learning.

#### The interviews focused on two main areas:

(1) suggested improvements to smartphone-based English learning, and

(2) recommendations to other students.

#### 1. Suggested Improvements to Smartphone-Based English Learning

The interview data revealed a variety of student-generated suggestions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of smartphone-assisted English learning. These suggestions can be grouped into several key themes:

**Content and exposure** students emphasized the importance of increasing exposure to authentic English materials. They suggested watching English-language movies and YouTube videos, as well as following English news content, as effective ways to improve listening skills and cultural familiarity. Language learning applications participants recommended downloading vocabulary-focused applications that provide useful and high-frequency words. Additionally, they highlighted the value of language-learning apps that support real-time conversations in English.

**Personalization and Assessment** Several students stressed the need for initial diagnostic assessments to tailor learning content according to learners' proficiency levels and specific goals, such as travel, work, or examination preparation. Regular assessments and progress reports were also suggested to help learners monitor their improvement over time.

**Technological Enhancements** Students proposed integrating artificial intelligence (AI) tools, particularly for pronunciation feedback and chatbot-based conversational practice. They also suggested adding language exchange features that allow learners to connect with peers for speaking practice.

**Accessibility and Design** To improve usability, students recommended allowing offline access through downloadable lessons, designing simple and user-friendly interfaces, and combining videos, audio materials, and interactive exercises to accommodate different learning styles. Finally, participants suggested adopting flexible pricing models, such as offering free basic features alongside premium options, to ensure wider accessibility for learners.

#### 2. Recommendations to Other Students

All interviewed students expressed a positive willingness to recommend smartphone-based English learning to other learners. Their recommendations were based on several perceived benefits, including:

- Improved communication and collaboration opportunities
- Access to enhanced and diverse learning tools
- Increased engagement and motivation
- Availability of a wide range of educational resources
- Support for organization and effective time management

Overall, students experienced smartphone-based learning as a practical, flexible, and motivating approach that complements traditional English language instruction.

#### 4.3 Interview summary

To enhance learning English by smartphone, the participants suggested a variety of practical and technological improvements to make smartphone-based English learning more effective and engaging. Many recommended immersive learning techniques, such as watching English movies or news on YouTube, using vocabulary apps to learn useful words, and practicing conversations in English through language exchange applications. These methods help learners build vocabulary, improve listening skills, and gain confidence in speaking. To make learning more personalized, participants proposed the use of initial assessments that adapt lessons to individual goals—whether for travel, academic exams, or work purposes. Regular feedback and progress tracking were also highlighted as essential for motivation and monitoring development. On the technological side, it was suggested to integrate AI-powered features, such as pronunciation feedback tools like Elsa Speak and chatbots for conversational practice. These tools can offer real-time correction and interaction, helping learners refine their skills more effectively. Further improvements included enabling offline access to learning materials, combining various media—videos, audio, and interactive exercises—for a richer learning experience, and designing a simple and accessible interface. The importance of syncing with calendar or note-taking apps was also mentioned to support learning routines and organization. Lastly, offering flexible pricing plans, including a free tier with optional premium features, was suggested to make learning accessible to a wider range of students.

#### 4.4 Discussion

The qualitative findings from the interviews strongly support the questionnaire results, reinforcing the conclusion that EFL students hold positive attitudes toward smartphone-based English learning. Moreover, the suggested improvements provide practical implications for educators, developers, and institutions seeking to enhance mobile-assisted language learning environments. Moreover, this kind of the results show that smartphones play a vital role in supporting English language learning among EFL students at Sabha University. Questionnaire data indicated that the most common activities included using language learning apps (95%), watching videos such as YouTube (85%), digital dictionaries (65%), and podcasts (70%). Less frequent activities, such as reading English texts (10%), suggest that students prefer interactive and multimedia-based approaches over text-heavy formats. Findings suggest that mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) provides learners with flexibility, accessibility, and motivational benefits, supporting more engaging and learner-centered language acquisition (Harmer, 2015). The follow-up interviews provided deeper insights into how students believe smartphone-based learning can be improved. Suggested enhancements included integrating AI-powered pronunciation tools, enabling offline access, combining multimedia formats, providing personalized learning pathways, and offering flexible pricing options. These suggestions demonstrate an awareness of both technological capabilities and pedagogical needs, reflecting recent perspectives in English language teaching that emphasize integrating technology with pedagogy to enhance interaction, personalization, and learner engagement (Sartini et al., 2023).

Notably, all interviewed students expressed willingness to recommend smartphone-based English learning to their peers, citing improved communication, access to resources, and increased engagement as primary benefits. This strong positive perception reinforces the idea that smartphones, when effectively integrated into language learning, can serve as both formal and informal learning tools that extend learning beyond the boundaries of time and space

(Li et al., 2022). Overall, the findings suggest that while students are already leveraging smartphones for English learning, there is significant potential for further enhancement through more personalized, interactive, and accessible learning experiences. The convergence between questionnaire results and interview feedback underscores the importance of designing mobile learning tools that align with learner preferences, technological advancements, and pedagogical best practices.

#### 4.5 Overall Recommendation:

Most participants recommend smartphone-based English learning to others due to its convenience, flexibility, and interactive features. However, the emphasize of its effectiveness would greatly improve with better content, more personalization, and advanced technology integration. Besides, smartphone-based English learning offers to students, participants responded positively, highlighting several key benefits:

1. Improved Communication and Collaboration: Smartphones make it easier for students to interact with peers, teachers, and language partners, enhancing speaking and listening skills.
2. Enhanced Learning Tools: A variety of educational apps and digital tools available on smartphones help students practice vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation more effectively.
3. Increased Engagement and Motivation: The interactive and multimedia nature of smartphone apps keeps students more engaged and motivated in their English learning journey.
4. Access to a Wide Range of Resources: Smartphones provide easy access to a vast collection of English learning materials, including videos, e-books, podcasts, and online courses.
5. Support for Organization and Study Planning: Features such as reminders, calendars, and note-taking apps help students manage their time and learning activities more efficiently. Based on these responses, EFL Sabha university students highly recommend smartphone-based English learning due to its accessibility, interactivity, and the valuable support it offers in developing language skills and maintaining consistent learning habits.

#### 5. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role smartphones play in supporting English language learning among EFL Libyan university students. The findings show that students hold a generally positive attitude toward smartphone use, viewing it as a convenient and flexible tool that allows them to access resources, practice language skills, and stay engaged beyond the classroom. Their reported practices—such as watching English videos, using dictionary and vocabulary apps, listening to audio materials, and engaging in online conversations—demonstrate how smartphones are effectively integrated into their daily learning routines.

At the same time, the study reveals several challenges that hinder optimal use, including distractions from social media, small screen size, high data costs, and the lack of structured learning programs. Although these challenges were acknowledged, most students felt they only slightly affected their learning, indicating that the benefits outweigh the difficulties. Overall, the evidence suggests that smartphones have strong potential as valuable tools for English language learning when supported with proper guidance and improvements. By addressing the identified challenges and incorporating students' suggestions—such as personalization, offline access, and AI-based feedback—smartphone-based learning can become even more effective, engaging, and accessible for EFL learners.

In conclusion, digital language learning apps show great potential for helping Libyan students improve their English skills. However, more research in recommend to see how lasting their benefits are and what encourages continued use.

#### 1. Abbreviations and Acronyms:

(EFL): English as a Foreign Language.

((MALL): Mobile – assisted Language Learning.

#### 2. References:

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