

CHALLENGES OF READING SKILLS OF STUDENTS AT THE B1 LEVEL IN ENGLISH LESSONS THROUGH MOBILE APPLICATIONS

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Annotation

The rapid integration of mobile technologies into language education has brought significant innovations in teaching and learning. However, the development of reading skills through mobile applications remains challenging, particularly for B1-level learners of English. This paper explores the linguistic, pedagogical, technological, and psychological challenges that students and teachers face when using mobile applications to enhance reading comprehension. Drawing on recent research in Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), the study identifies key issues such as limited vocabulary, screen-related distractions, insufficient digital literacy, and the misalignment of mobile content with curriculum objectives. The paper concludes with recommendations for improving mobile-based reading instruction and calls for a more balanced, pedagogically informed integration of mobile technologies in English language teaching.

Keywords: reading skills, B1 level, mobile learning, MALL, digital literacy, challenges, language teaching

Introduction

In recent years, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has emerged as one of the most effective approaches in English language teaching. Mobile applications such as ReadTheory, Duolingo, BBC Learning English, and LingQ enable students to access authentic reading materials, receive instant feedback, and monitor their progress anytime and anywhere (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2020). Despite these advantages, many students at the B1 level struggle to achieve measurable improvement in reading comprehension when learning through mobile devices. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), B1-level learners should be able to understand factual texts, identify key information, and infer meaning from context (Council of Europe, 2018). However, the transition from traditional to mobile learning introduces multiple challenges. These include linguistic difficulties,

inadequate teacher preparation, technological barriers, and the psychological effects of digital reading environments. This thesis aims to analyze these challenges systematically and propose practical ways to address them in Uzbek educational contexts.

Literature Review

The development of reading skills in a second language is a complex process that depends on vocabulary knowledge, grammar, and comprehension strategies (Nation, 2013). Mobile-assisted reading platforms have been praised for increasing learner autonomy and motivation. Burston (2015) argues that MALL supports continuous learning and engagement by offering adaptive and gamified reading experiences. However, Traxler (2019) notes that mobile learning environments often fragment attention and lead to surface-level comprehension rather than deep reading. Research by Lin and Yu (2021) found that mobile applications enhance vocabulary acquisition but do not automatically improve higher-order reading skills such as inference and summarizing. Deterding (2021) also observed that while gamification can increase short-term motivation, it sometimes distracts learners from content comprehension. In developing countries, including Uzbekistan, limited digital literacy and unequal access to technology further complicate effective implementation (Chen & Li, 2020). Therefore, teachers need to adopt a structured methodology that balances technological benefits with pedagogical rigor.

Main Challenges

Linguistic Barriers

B1-level learners often lack sufficient vocabulary and grammatical awareness to comprehend mobile reading texts independently. Many mobile applications use authentic materials that exceed learners' linguistic range, including idioms, cultural references, and academic vocabulary. Without teacher scaffolding, students may misinterpret meanings or lose motivation. Additionally, small screen sizes reduce visibility and limit note-taking or annotation, which are essential for deeper comprehension.

Technological and Access Issues

The effectiveness of mobile learning depends on stable internet connectivity, compatible devices, and user familiarity with the platform. In many Uzbek schools and universities, students face technical barriers such as outdated smartphones, limited data plans, or unreliable internet access. These limitations hinder consistent practice and

contribute to learner frustration (Alamer & Alrishan, 2022). Moreover, some applications require paid subscriptions or constant updates, making them less accessible to all students.

Pedagogical Challenges

Teachers play a central role in guiding and assessing mobile-assisted reading. However, many educators lack formal training in MALL pedagogy. Without proper integration into lesson plans, mobile activities may become isolated exercises rather than meaningful learning experiences (Kukulka-Hulme & Shield, 2020). Furthermore, teachers often find it difficult to monitor students' independent reading progress or verify comprehension beyond multiple-choice quizzes.

Cognitive and Psychological Factors

Mobile learning environments expose students to numerous distractions such as social media notifications, advertisements, and multitasking. B1 learners, who are still developing self-regulation and critical reading skills, often find it difficult to maintain concentration. Continuous exposure to screens can lead to digital fatigue and lower retention rates (Chen & Li, 2020). Some students also experience anxiety about using unfamiliar applications, which reduces confidence and engagement.

Cultural and Contextual Limitations

Many mobile reading materials are designed for global users and do not reflect local cultures or contexts. This cultural mismatch can reduce learner interest and comprehension. In Uzbekistan, where contextual relevance and cultural identity are integral to education, students may find foreign topics less engaging or difficult to relate to. Localization of content is therefore essential for effective reading instruction.

To address these challenges, a combination of pedagogical, technological, and institutional strategies is required:

1. **Teacher Training:** English teachers should receive professional development in MALL pedagogy to effectively integrate mobile tools into reading lessons.
2. **Curriculum Alignment:** Selected applications must correspond to CEFR B1 descriptors and classroom objectives.
3. **Blended Learning:** Combine mobile activities with traditional classroom discussions to reinforce comprehension and vocabulary.
4. **Digital Literacy Education:** Students should be trained in how to use mobile reading tools critically and independently.

5. Cultural Adaptation: Developers and teachers should collaborate to create localized reading materials relevant to Uzbek learners.

Conclusion

Mobile applications have great potential to enhance reading skills at the B1 level, but their effectiveness depends on how they are implemented. Linguistic complexity, technical barriers, insufficient teacher preparation, and learner distraction remain significant obstacles. A pedagogically guided, culturally relevant, and digitally inclusive approach is essential to maximize the benefits of mobile-assisted reading in English lessons. As Uzbekistan continues to modernize its education system, addressing these challenges will be key to building more effective and motivating language learning environments.

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