LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES USING MOBILE APPLICATIONS [ABSTRACT]

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose  This study examines how the use of a Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) application influences the learners' attitudes towards the process of learning, in voluntary and mandatory environments.

Background  Mobile devices and applications, which have become an integral part of our lives, are used for different purposes, including educational objectives. Among others, they are used in the process of foreign language acquisition. The use of a MALL application to learn foreign languages has advantages and drawbacks, which are important to understand, in order to achieve better learning results, while improving the enjoyment of the process.

Methodology  The study population included people who participated in a foreign language course and used Duolingo application on a mobile device in parallel. One group consisted of high school pupils, who were obliged to use the application, while the other group consisted of people who took face-to-face courses, and chose to use the same Duolingo application voluntarily, in order to assist their studies.

Contribution  This paper helps to understand the perceived advantages and drawbacks of using a MALL application by students both in mandatory and voluntary environments.

Findings  Most of the participants found the MALL Duolingo application as enhancing the learning process. The gamification characteristics, ease of use, ubiquity and self-learning facilities had a stimulating effect on the process of learning, and contributed to the willingness to continue using the application and to recommend it to others.

Recommendations for Practitioners  The research findings can contribute to both teachers and students who conduct and participate in foreign language courses, by helping them examine the possibility of combining mobile learning with a traditional face-to-face course.

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Moreover, the findings can assist developers of mobile learning applications, in order to include gamification options in the process of learning.

**Recommendation for Researchers**

Researchers in the fields of mobile applications and m-learning need to understand the factors enhancing the learning process, in order to develop the next generations of m-learning applications.

**Impact on Society**

Mobile devices have become an accessory that almost every person in the world uses. Its ubiquitous characteristics allow using it everywhere and anytime. This is a great opportunity to facilitate education to people all around the world. Gamification of m-learning applications can promote and encourage the use of these applications.

**Future Research**

Further examination is need in different cultures, in order to understand if the findings are universal.

**Keywords**

Mobile applications, foreign languages, MALL, Mobile Assisted Language Learning, m-learning, gamification

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