USE OF MOBILE DEVICE LANGUAGE LEARNING APPLICATIONS BY TURKISH SPEAKING ADULTS: A SURVEY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language education is going under constant change. Mobile technologies have gained significant momentum in foreign language education in recent years with their unique features and affordances. A large number of mobile apps have been specifically designed, created, and used for teaching foreign languages. Although these apps seem to be ubiquitous, much remains unknown with regard to their actual usage as self-directed materials. This paper reports and discusses the results of a survey study that aimed to investigate adult Turkish speaking mobile device owners' experiences with and reasons for foreign language teaching app use/nonuse, perceived effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses of apps, and suggestions for improving language teaching apps. The survey included close-ended and open-ended questions and are analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis methods. Results showed that mobile language learning applications are perceived to have a strong potential to overcome the constraints in front of language learning such as time, space, linguistic input. Apps can personalize instruction by taking into account the needs of different students and increase the motivation of learning with features such as gamification. However, it was also observed that learners rarely used mobile technologies used to enable a more communication-based and collaborative language learning experience.

Key Words: Mobile language learning, mobile apps, independent learning, self-directed learning, adult learners

TÜRKÇE KONUŞAN YETİŞKİNLERİN MOBİL CİHAZ DİL ÖĞRENME UYGULAMALARI KULLANIMI: ANKET ÇALIŞMASI

ÖZ

Yabancı dil eğitimi sürekli değişiyor ve kendini yeniliyor. Mobil teknolojiler benzersiz özellikleri ve sağlarlıkları ile yabancı dil eğitiminde son yıllarda önemli bir ivme kazanmıştır. Yabancı dilleri öğretmek için çok sayıda mobil uygulama özel olarak tasarlanmış, yaratılmış ve kullanılmıştır. Her ne kadar bu uygulamalar her yerde görülse de, öz-yönelimli bir öğrenme materyali olarak fiili kullanımları konusunda pek az bilgi vardır. Bu makale, yetişkin Türkçe konuşan mobil cihaz sahiplerinin yabancı dil öğretimi uygulamalarını kullanımı, uygulamaların algılanan etkinliği, güçlü ve zayıf yönleri ile dil öğretiminin iyileştirilmesi konusundaki deneyimlerini ve nedenlerini araştırmayı amaçlayan bir anket çalışmasının sonuçlarını raporlar ve tartışır. Anket, kapalı uçlu ve açık uçlu sorular içermekte olup, tanımlayıcı istatistikler ve içerik analizi yöntemleri kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, mobil dil öğrenme uygulamalarının zaman, mekân, dilbilimsel girdi gibi dil öğrenimi önündeki kısıtlamaları aşma konusunda güçlü bir potansiyele sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Uygulamalar öğrencilerin farklı ihtiyaçlarını dikkate alarak öğretimi kişiselleştirebilir ve oyunlaştırma gibi özelliklerle öğrenme motivasyonlarını artırabilmektedir. Bununla birlikte, öğrencilerin daha iletişim tabanlı ve işbirlikçi bir dil öğrenme deneyimi sağlamak için sağlanan mobil teknolojileri nadiren kullandıkları da gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mobil dil öğrenme, mobil cihaz uygulamaları, bağımsız öğrenme, öz-yönelimli öğrenme, yetişkin öğrenenler

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, there is a strong demand for digital language teaching tools, and with increasing ownership of mobile devices, the role of mobile technologies gained significant momentum in education in the last decade. The features of mobile devices support permanency, accessibility, immediacy, interactivity, and situation of instructional activities into daily life (Ogato, & Yano, 2005). The ubiquitousness and portability of smartphones and tablet computers help overcoming constraints of classroom-based learning such as time and place by providing opportunities for increased amount of accessibility to various instructional materials anytime-anywhere and thus allow for a more personal and learner-centered experience. Mobile devices allow users control over content and pace and this makes them appealing for individuals who are keen to take control of their own learning by setting their learning goals and take initiatives in planning to engage in learning activities. Learning through mobile devices is also preferred by those who lack financial and logistic resources to receive instruction in formal settings (Hsu, 2013). Supporting informal learning through embedding natural and authentic activities into daily life is another important reason why mobile learning thrives. Furthermore, the connectivity and interactivity of mobile devices "facilitate and enrich the processes of collaboration, creation, and resource sharing" among the users with similar aims and interests. (Demouy, & Kukulska-Hulme, 2010, p. 218).

Mobile applications, commonly known as apps, are a certain type of computer software that run on mobile devices and usually deliver a limited amount of information or instruction at a time. The mobile app industry has become one of the biggest industries in the world which involves millions of app developers and billions of app users. Statistics show that the total number of mobile app downloads in 2018 was 194 billion (Statista, 2019a). Education is the third most popular category of apps following games and business apps in Apple App Store with a share of 8.52 percent (Statista, 2019b) and the worldwide m-education spending is projected to reach 37.8 billion US dollars in 2020, up from 3.4 billion US dollars in 2011 (Statista, 2019c). A large number of apps have been specifically designed, created, and used for teaching foreign languages, and app-based language learning's popularity is growing around the world. According to the Jolin (2017) in a Guardian article, the number of language related apps in the Apple App Store alone is more than 350. Duolingo, the most popular language learning app on the market, claims to have over 300 million active users; while Memrise, another popular app, claims to have 40 million users. (Smith, 2018). Another popular app, Babbel, states that its U.S. sales escalated by 140 percent in the second half of 2017, increasing from 40,000 to 70,000 new paying users in the US alone (Busvine, 2018).

Therefore, considering this remarkable growth, it is important to explore the use and effectiveness of mobile applications in various learning contexts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Current approaches in foreign language teaching

Current approaches of language teaching emphasize the importance of an environment with linguistically rich input and frequent opportunities for the production of communicative language through the negotiation of meaning with various types of interactional feedback, noticing of a new language and engagement both affectively and cognitively in the language experience (Gass, & Selinker, 2001; Long, 1996; Swain, 1985). Most commonly used approaches in contemporary foreign language teaching are the methodologies that primarily focus on the communicative proficiency in language; and to this end, instructional techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes (Richards, & Rodgers, 2001). Classroom language learning is now linked with real-life communication and authentic and contextualized samples of language are preferred over decontextualized, discrete items of vocabulary and grammar. Active participation of the learner in their learning process and opportunities for them to negotiate meaning, interact and cooperate in the target language with other users are key in this framework. Furthermore, there is a growing attention in recent years towards a social cognitive perspective according to which language learning is a social practice and the outcome of a process of co-constructing one's L2 knowledge with peers through meaningful social interaction (Atkinson, 2002). Collaborative learning activities are used in this approach to engage learners in providing scaffolding on each other's language production (Storch, 2002).

A learning environment that fosters reflection, motivation, learner engagement, and learner autonomy are also considered essential for effective language learning (Benson, 2007; Dörnyei, 1998;). Learning contexts and platforms that enable differentiated instruction through allowing learners to progress according to their pace of learning, study individually and reflect upon their own learning via self-evaluation can accommodate individual differences and needs of learners (Richards, & Rodgers, 2001). Such a positive effect can increase a language learner's ability and desire to learn.

2.2. Features of Mobile Language Learning (MALL)

Vavoula and Karagiannidis (2005) define mobile learning as "any sort of learning that happens when the learner is not at a fixed predetermined location, or learning that happens when the learner takes advantage of the learning opportunity offered by mobile technologies" (p. 537). With the development of hardware technology, smartphones and tablet computers outnumbered the desktop and laptop computers (Pegrum, 2014) and this proliferation have made learning both in an out of the classroom more convenient. The availability of digital resources through mobile devices has encouraged and stimulated language learning to take place beyond the school contexts and helped learners to regulate their own learning. Flexibility and accessibility affordances of mobile device apps can provide opportunities and means for learners to set their own learning goals, develop strategies and undertake learning activities to achieve these goals without the immediate intervention of a teacher and therefore are ideal self-directed learning platforms.

Benefits of mobile applications in education include socialization, entertainment, round the clock availability, effective utilization of leisure hours, alternate modes of learning and fun and informal learning experience (Gangaiamaran, & Pasupathi, 2017). Mobile language learning apps, through self-contained 10-15 minute lessons, also offer their users a convenient way of self-directed language learning experience with opportunities of low-cost access to language learning materials, ability to learn on the go, and the flexibility in choosing what one immediately needs to learn. They have the potential to offer exposure to rich input in the target language in multiple media formats; opportunities to practice speaking via voice recording and speech recognition tools, and social platforms; a wide range of activity types and control options; connection with other language users, interactivity with bots powered by artificial intelligence; immediate and personalized feedback; and a record of learning processes. Extensive capabilities for input enhancement and modification with a range of cues such as aural and textual repetition, speed and volume modification, use of color, graphics, animations, responsive touch screens, acoustic enhancements, and change of input mode increase the saliency and noticing of the target forms (Russel, & Cieslik, 2012). While game-like features of language apps such as elements of competition, cooperation, exploration and storytelling make them fun and engaging, the individual and private nature of app-based language learning, and the fact that learners do not have to expose themselves to other learners while practicing make them appealing for all levels of learners. Mobile based language learning through apps customize the learning experience according to the learners' individual needs, preferences and abilities (Sun, & Yang, 2013). All these affordances hold a great potential to provide optimal conditions for language learners that include opportunities to interact socially and negotiate meaning, interact in the target language with an authentic audience, engage in authentic tasks, produce varied and creative language, have enough time and feedback, mindfully attend to the learning process, have an atmosphere with an ideal stress/anxiety level and support for autonomy (Egbert, & Hanson-Smith, 1999).

2.3. Previous studies

Although there is a tremendous growth of mobile technologies on language learning, there is little research that investigates the use and effectiveness of commercially produced language apps, especially in informal learning contexts. A review of mobile assisted language learning (MALL) implementations by Burston (2014a) shows that despite the great potential of constantly developing technologies, most applications are based on structuralist approaches and are limited with vocabulary and grammar tutorial drill activities.

Limited number of studies looked at the use of specific language apps and while the results mostly show increased exposure to the target language, increased motivation, positive attitudes, enhanced self-reported learning with mobile learning, they also support Burston's (2014a) arguments. Loewen et al. (2019) studied a semester-long Turkish learning experiences of nine individuals at a US university exclusively with Duolingo. Participants had no previous exposure to Turkish and they agreed to use the app for at least an hour a week for 12 weeks but on average, they used it for 23 minutes weekly. Participants used the app outside of class and were allowed to go through the 67 learning modules at their own discretion. After 12 weeks, they took a Duolingo progress test and a Turkish test which had reading, writing, lexicogrammar, listening, and speaking subtests. Results showed improvement on the L2 measures at the end of the study and a positive, medium correlation was found between the amount of time spent on Duolingo and learning gains. Lowest scores were obtained in speaking and listening while higher scores were achieved in reading and writing. Participants enjoyed the flexibility of the tool most; however, their motivation level wavered towards the end of the study. One reason for this was the repetition of certain types of activities such as translation and the very little opportunity provided by the app for authentic interaction. Hence, the participants expressed frusturation with what they could actually do with the language after many hours of studying. These results were in parallel with previous research. Malerba (2015), in her analysis of Livemocha and Busuu online communities, also found that learners appreciated the self-paced nature of learning; yet, they found the repetition of the same typology of exercise as a serious limitation. Those students who were already autonomous took responsibility of their own learning and proceeded more strategically such as joining the

learning communities these platforms offered but others did not take this advantage. Ketyi's (2015) experimental study with university students who used Busuu for learning a language versus who did not use any apps showed high satistaction and language gains with the app use. However, despite the significant increase in language gains and high satisfaction, these language apps were still new to the participants and they did not want to pay for the premium membership after the free trial. Niño (2015) investigated the perceptions and experiences of Higher Education students at an English university on their use of mobile apps for independent language learning. The results of the survey research revealed that students found mobile apps especially suitable for passive language skills such as vocabulary acquisition, written and oral comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar practice.

Other studies drew attention to the need of a guidance in the use of apps in informal learning. Mason and Wenxin's (2017) mixed methodology study on how adult learners at different levels of proficiency use mobile apps to support their Chinese character learning showed that apps play a significant role in learning and students recognise their value; however, learners need training in how to exploit apps' full potential.

Rosell-Aguilar (2018) surveyed 4095 Busuu app users to understand how they use the app and what features they like best/least. The results showed that most of the users were beginner level English language learners, learning the language mainly for personal interest, travelling and professional purposes. Majority claimed to use the app several times a week and mostly in unplanned sessions, as the opportunity arose. While 40 percent of the users stated that they were not registered to a language course while using the app but used additional language resources to support their learning; 30 percent claimed to use busuu exclusively. Vocabulary, followed by speaking and listening were the skills users perceived to improve most. The least liked feature of the app was the feedback given on writing. A majority of the users rated the app positively in terms of meeting their initial expectations and believed that it contributed to their overall language learning.

A few studies analyzed the pedagogical principles behind the design of major mobile language learning apps. In her master's thesis, Guo (2013) examined 34 mobile apps for learning English speaking according to the analytical framework of MapALL (Mobile apps-assisted Language Learning) she established in her study. The findings revealed that most mobile apps aimed at adult learners with intermediate or lower proficiency levels and general interests in English speaking. Behaviorist learning theory prevailed in most of the analyzed apps through drill and practices on linguistic skills. Pronunciation, conversation, video lesson, reference and authentic content were identified as the five most common content apps offered. Heil et al. (2016) investigated the primary pedagogical focuses of popular language learning apps by analyzing fifty apps that were selected on the basis of their rankings on Google Play and in the Apple iTunes App Store in terms of user input, assessment, implicit and explicit grammar instruction, corrective feedback, and user interaction. Their analysis showed that there was significantly more emphasis on teaching isolated vocabulary than contextualized usage. Apps mainly contained drill-like mechanisms with very little corrective feedback and failed to cater to learners' individual differences and needs.

2.4. Purpose of the study

The steady proliferation of educational apps shows us that it is important to investigate their effectiveness and use by the learners. Overall, previous studies mostly report positive results in language gains and attitudes; however, the extent to which mobile technologies and mobile learning apps are actually used to support increased communication, interaction and collaboration of learners through the language learning process, especially when used independently and outside of the classroom, is still obscure. Foreign language apps also ubiquitous in Turkey, yet, there is a scarcity of research with regard to how they are used by Turkish speaking adults as part of a self-directed learning experience, outside of the classroom. This research aims to contribute filling this gap and attempts to answer the following research questions

1- To what extent do Turkish speaking adult mobile device owners use foreign language teaching apps?
2- Which features of foreign language apps do they use?
3- How do they perceive the usefulness of apps on learning a foreign language outside of the classroom?

3. METHODOLOGY

In this research, a cross-sectional survey of Turkish speaking mobile device owners was conducted online using the Survey Monkey software with the aim to assess their sociodemographic characteristics, experiences with and reasons for foreign language teaching app use/nonuse, the perceived effectiveness, strength and weaknesses apps, and users' suggestions for improving apps.

3.1. Participants

Potential participants were reached through a variety of Turkish online forums, Facebook, and twitter updates and were invited to voluntarily answer the survey. The main aim was to reach a population with familiarity of using

technology in their daily lives and no particular educational level, profession or work status were targeted. The eligibility criterion was to be 18 years and older and owning a mobile device. The survey remained online for six weeks.

3.2. Research instruments and procedures

At the time this study was planned, the researcher could not find any existing published survey that could be adapted for this study and therefore the survey was designed by the researcher after an extensive review of previous literature on app-based learning and a careful examination of several commonly known language teaching apps created for commercial purposes. The initially 25-item survey draft was created in Turkish and sent out to two experts in the language education and educational technology fields and necessary revisions were made on the items along with the expert opinions. Later, the draft survey was sent to 18 volunteer Turkish adults for piloting purposes and the survey was finalized with 22 questions to gather information in the following areas: a) sociodemographic characteristics, b) experiences with and reasons for foreign language teaching app use/nonuse c) perceived effectiveness of apps on language learning d) perceived strengths and weaknesses of apps e) general suggestions to improve existing apps.

Question number seven in the survey asked respondents whether they used a foreign language teaching app and those who responded negatively were directly led to the question asking them the reasons for not using such an app. After that question, they were directed to the last question of the survey which was an open-ended question, asking for suggestions as to how to improve foreign language teaching apps to increase their efficiency. Therefore, while those participants who indicated using a foreign language app answered a total of 21 questions, those who did not use answered a total of 9 questions altogether.

Most of the questions had close-ended answer options for participants to select from in order to make it easier for them to answer the questions and easier for the researcher to code. However, an open-ended "Other" option was also provided for which participants could enter their own answers and personal comments. Out of 22 questions, ten questions required respondents to select only one of the available options or enter their own response, nine questions allowed respondents to select more than one option and three questions at the end of the survey required open-ended answers.

3.3. Data analysis

All items were calculated using descriptive statistics. Content Analysis by Creswell (2012) has been used with an extension of Evaluation Coding framework of Miles and Huberman (1994) for the qualitative data gathered through the open-ended questions of the questionnaire. This framework has been reported to be appropriate for assigning codes into qualitative data with the purpose of examining evaluative views. (Miles, & Huberman, 1994). Two coders examined the data and determined overarching categories with an interrater reliability of 85%.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

A total of 177 Turkish speaking adults who owned a mobile device voluntarily answered the survey online. A summary of the sample characteristics is shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Study Sample Characteristics

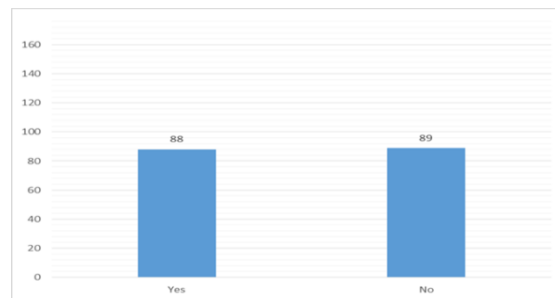| Sample characteristics		*N*	*%*
Gender	Male	28	16
	Female	149	84
Age ranges	18-20	11	6
	21-29	16	9
	30-39	65	37
	40-49	78	44
	50-59	7	4
	60 and above	0	0

Table 1. continued
Sample characteristics

Level of education	High school diploma	8	5
	Bachelor student/diploma	108	61
	Master's student/diploma	25	14
	Doctorate student/diploma	36	20
Work status	Full time	113	64
	Part time	17	10
	Student	17	10
	Currently not working	30	17
Ownership of mobile device	Yes	177	100
	No	0	0

4.2. Foreign Language App Use and Nonuse

Although all 177 participants owned a mobile device, only half of them have used a foreign language app on their devices. 49.7% of the respondents (88/177) answered positively to the question "Have you used a foreign language teaching app on your mobile device?" while 50.3% (89/177) answered negatively and indicated that they did not use any foreign language apps on their devices (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Distribution of foreign language app users

A summary of the distribution of the sample characteristics of those indicated using a foreign language mobile app versus those who did not according to their gender, age range, level of education and work status is given in Table 2.

Table 2.
Distribution of Sample Characteristics According to Use/nonuse of Apps

Sample characteristics		Users		Non-users	
		F	*%*	*F*	*%*
Gender	Male	12	43	16	57
	Female	76	51	73	49
Age ranges	18-20	9	73	3	27
	21-29	9	56	7	44
	30-39	34	52	31	48
	40-49	41	53	37	47
	50-59	1	14	6	86
	60 and above	0	0	0	0
Level of education	High school diploma	4	50	4	50
	Bachelor student/diploma	52	56	48	44
	Master's student/diploma	6	24	19	76
	Doctorate student/diploma	19	53	17	47
Work status	Full time	55	49	58	51
	Part time	10	59	7	41
	Student	11	65	6	35
	Currently not working	13	44	17	56

Age group of 18-20 had the highest rate of app use while 50-59 has the lowest rate. Of the 7 respondents from 50-59 age group, only one reported to use a foreign language app. While the proportions were close in high school,

bachelor and doctorate students and diploma holders, nonuse of apps was much higher among the master's students and diploma holders. Considering the affordance of mobile learning to offer learners an opportunity to learn at a time of their own convenience, it would be expected to see the highest rate of app use among full time working people, who might have less access to formal learning settings. Yet, among the participants, students followed by part-time working individuals had the highest rate of foreign language app use.

4.2.1. *Nonuse of apps*

Those 89 participants who indicated that they did not use a foreign language app were asked the reasons as to why they did not and Table 3 shows their answers in the order of frequency.

Table 3.
Reasons for Not Using a Foreign Language App

| Statements	*f*	*Percentage*
I do not need to learn a foreign language	22	25
I am not familiar with foreign language apps	21	24
I downloaded the app(s) on my mobile device but then I forgot to use /I did not use	19	21
I do not believe in the efficiency of mobile device apps on language learning	15	17
I do not have the habit of using mobile device apps	4	5
Other	4	4
I find using mobile device apps difficult	3	3
I do not believe that using mobile device apps are secure	1	1

Those four respondents who entered a comment under Other option mentioned that learning a foreign language was either not on their agenda or among their priorities at the time of the survey. However, one of them said that he/she will soon start learning a language and then was planning to download apps on their device.

4.2.2. *Use of apps*

As a first step of further analysis, the total sample (n = 88) of those who responded positively that they used a foreign language app on their mobile devices was checked for incomplete responses which resulted in a reduced net sample size of 68 responses (n = 68).

Participants were asked which apps they used with eleven most commonly known apps given as options. They could select multiple options and also could choose to enter a different app name that they use through the Other section. Duolingo was the most commonly selected app (68 times), followed by busuu (26), LearnEnglish (22), Voscreen (21), Quizlet (15), Memrise (14), FluentU (13), Grammar Up, Babbel and Mondly (2 each). A few other app names such as Lingualeo, Engly, Wlingua, ABA English, English Club TV, Lingusta and Audible were also brought up by the respondents.

English was the most commonly (47 times) learned language through mobile apps followed by Spanish (13), German (10), Italian (7) French (5), Korean (1) and Arabic (1). The participants were also asked to rate their own level of proficiency in the language that they were learning at the time they started using the mobile device app and 29% selected "true beginner", another 28% selected "lower intermediate", 27% selected "intermediate", 7% selected "upper-intermediate", 9% selected advanced levels. Figure 2 summarizes participants' self-reported frequency of language learning app use on their mobile device.
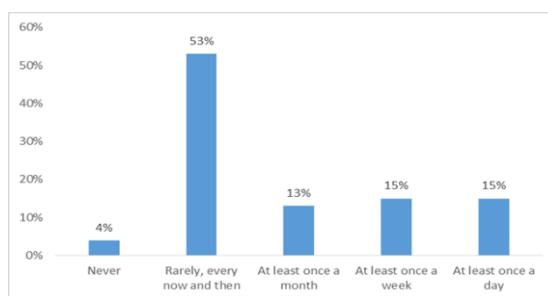
Figure 2. Frequency of language learning app use

Participants were asked their language related reasons and goals in using the apps they have selected and they could select more than one option. Table 4 shows participants' responses in the order of frequency.

Table 4.
Reasons for Using Mobile Device Foreign Language Apps

Statements	F
To develop vocabulary knowledge	42
To develop speaking skill	36
To develop listening skill	32
To develop reading skill	26
To develop writing skill	20
To develop pronunciation	20
To learn grammar rules	17
To use the language abroad	17
To use the target language in professional life	10
To prepare for a foreign language exam	5
For academic studies	2

Another question enquired the features most commonly used in the foreign language apps. Certain options were provided for the respondents and they could select more than one option. Table 5 shows these features in the order of frequency.

Table 5.
Commonly Used Features of Mobile Device Foreign Language Apps

Statements	F
Listening to audio input	39
Doing grammar exercises	30
Reading texts	29
Vocabulary flashcards	24
Dictionary	23
Pronunciation exercises	21
Answering tests	20
Translation	18
Writing	14
Watching videos	12
Speaking by recording own voice	9
Playing games	7
Communicating with other users through audio/video or written chat	3

One person answered this question saying that they followed the whole content in the app without focusing on any particularr area.

As these two tables reveal, participants mainly used the apps for drill and practices of linguistic skills such as grammar and pronunciation exercises, vocabulary study, answering tests rather than for interaction, communication or contextualized activities. Even though speaking skill was the second most selected reason for using apps, very few participants mentioned using the voice recording or communication with other users features.

The features participants paid attention to in the foreign language apps when selecting and deciding to download them on their mobile devices was another question in the survey. Certain options were provided for the respondents and they could select more than one option. Table 6 shows these features in the order of frequency.

Table 6.
Features Paid Attention to in Selecting Mobile Device Foreign Language Apps

Statements	F
Being free of charge	55
The language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, vocabulary etc) it focuses on	33
The richness of audio and visual input it provides	33

Table 6. continued

Statements	F
Its foreign language teaching approach	28
The way it corrects errors	18
Working offline as well	15
Keeping track of progress through a personal account	14
Presence of games in it	14
Availability of interaction with other users	5

When participants were asked to rate the efficiency of the app(s) they used to support their language learning on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 indicating totally inefficient and 5 indicating very efficient, on average their rating was 3.12.

The respondents were asked on which device they used the apps and where they mostly used them. They were given multiple options from among which they could select more than one option as well as an Other option in which they could enter their own answers. According to the responses, the apps are most commonly used on mobile telephones (95% of all the responses), followed by tablet computer (23%), and laptops (11%). Despite the possibility of using mobile device apps anytime anywhere, 69% of the responses indicated "at home" use, 42% "on public transportation", 21% "at work", 18% "in bed before sleeping", 18% "while running errands outside", 6% "at school", 5% "in the car".

4.3. Perceived strengths of apps

The reduced sample of 68 who reported on using mobile language apps answered the two open ended questions that took place at the end of the survey asking the participants to describe the strengths and weaknesses of the apps that they used or were using. All the comments were read by two raters and overarching themes were determined and comments were categorized according to these themes.

A total of 52 participants (76%) answered this question. Rich input and exposure to target language through the apps was the most commonly indicated strength, mentioned in the 25% (13 times) of the comments. Respondents commented that apps provided them with rich and varied input through audio, video and text, and allowed them to have access to input produced by native speakers of the target language. Several of the participants mentioned that daily and most up to date language chunks in critical communication areas are presented and repeated by the apps until they are mastered by the user. "The repetition of chunks in the apps reinforce learning, I became automatic in using important chunks after several quick sessions" commented one of the users. "The contents of the dialogs in video and audio files are very well selected to develop daily speaking skills" said another user and "being exposed to dialogues from daily life with their accurate pronunciation is the most important strength for me " commented another one. Quick and easy access and practical use of the apps anywhere, anytime was the second most common theme, mentioned in 21% (11 times) of the comments. "Language apps allow me to use the limited time I have in a productive way" remarked one of the participants while most of the others emphasized that they are easy to use, provide quick access to learning, and very practical as they are handy in their mobile devices all the time. Pronunciation was mentioned in the 17% (9 times) of the comments with a specific emphasis on exposure to the correct and native speaker pronunciation of the target vocabulary and language chunks. Participants appreciated that the apps allowed them to develop their pronunciation; however, only two of the comments actually reported using automatic voice recording feature of apps for pronunciation practice while the rest of the comments all focused on passive reception of correct pronunciation. None of the comments mentioned communication and collaboration through voice chat feature that some of the apps had. Adaptivity feature of mobile learning apps and ability to identify users' current level, recognize each learner's weak points and frequent errors and thus addressing different ability levels and speed of learners were mentioned in 14% (7 times) of the comments. Exposure to vocabulary in the apps with correct pronunciation, easy and quick access to its meaning and with rich multimedia support was mentioned in 12% (6 times). "It is enough to tap on an unknown vocabulary item on the screen to learn its meaning" commented one of the participants, "It is great that words are presented in context, with their pronunciation, meaning and even translation all at the same time" said another one. Ability to practice grammar through drill exercises and tests was mentioned in 8% (4 times) of the comments; richness and variety of multimedia use including appealing graphics, high quality audio and video was also mentioned in another 8% (4 times). Surprisingly, the presence of immediate feedback and error correction was (3 times) and gamification of apps (2 times) were mentioned in very small number of comments. One participant said that they liked it when other users (native and nonnative) of the app provided feedback to their errors. "Apps are designed like games, there is an intelligent design in the background that recognizes my level and I like learning the language while having fun" commented one of the participants. Another participant mentioned that they liked it when the app sent them regular notifications to complete their daily exercises, encouraging them to practice the targer language frequently.

4.4. Perceived weaknesses of apps

A total of 26 participants (50%) answered the open-ended question that asked them to describe the weaknesses and shortcomings of the apps they used or were using. The overarching themes for this question were the lack of comprehensive content mentioned in 31% (8 times) of the comments and lack of communicative and interactive activities reported in 19% (5 times). Lack of communicative activities and focusing too much on decontextualized grammar activities were considered as important handicaps of apps. This was in line with the reported limitations in previous research findings (Loewen et al., 2019; Malerba 2015; Niño, 2015).

Below are some of the comments made by the participants on these issues.

"The apps are really good in grammar drills but I don't think they can develop communicative skills in the foreign language."

"The app doesn't provide opportunuties to become engaged in dialogs in English."

"Too grammar oriented."

"There are no real speaking activities."

"The content is too narrow:one cannot progress much."

"It is too repetitive, same vocabulary and content is repeated all the time. I'd like to learn more but I can't."

Lack of native language instructions (Turkish, in this case) in the apps was another concern voiced in 15% (4 times) of the comments. Participants said that, being true beginners, in the absence of native language instructions, they had to get help from external resources to be able to operate the app. Another 15% (4 times) of the comments focused on suffering from the presence of too many within app commercials and/or being asked for payment to continue using the app. Finally, 23 % (6 times) of the comments included complaints about the technical problems of the apps and inaccuracy of content in some of them.

4.5. General suggestions

The last question of the survey was open ended and asked for the general suggestions of the participants as to how to increase the effectiveness of foreign language mobile apps in language teaching. This question was asked to all 177 respondents and 88 of them (50%) left a comment. 56 of those comments were categorized according to recurring themes while the rest were found to be either irrelevant or not offering any particular suggestions. 61% of those comments (34 times) focused on the instructional design aspects of mobile learning apps. A significant amount of those comments (22 times) drew attention to providing tutorials to the learners, immediate and personalized feedback, individualization of learning paths, and offering more personalized and appealing content through the use of efficient multimedia tools.

"The app should provide individualized goals for each learner and recycle input accordingly."

"It should be engaging like a game that you would like to continue playing so that I would prefer using the app to listening to music on my mobile device"

"It should take into consideration the target learner groups' likes and interests. For example, if it is an app for children, the content and the graphics should be appealing for them."

Another eleven comments suggested the apps be designed to be more interactive, allow communication with other users or native speakers of the target language through the app as in the following:

"The app should offer opportunities to practice the language, there must be a social aspect to it such as the ability to talk to other users of the language online."

"It can be beneficial only if it provides an opportunity to chat with real people."

"It should encourage its users to actually speak and interact in the foreign language."

39% of the comments in the general suggestions section addressed more technical aspects of app design. Ability to use the app offline (8 times), user friendly and intuitive interface design (7 times), free access to the app (6 times), sending of regular notifications to encourage learning and keeping the interest of the users alive (3 times) and designing bite-size chunks of learning activities that can be managed in short amounts of time rather than larger modules (3 times) were the recurring themes.

5. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The research presented in this paper was subject to several limitations. One major constraint was the rather small sample size. A total of 177 adults agreed to participate in the survey. Slightly more than half of them reported not using a foreign language app on their mobile devices and therefore, they completed only nine questions out of twenty-two. The second constraint was the collection of the survey data. Respondents of the survey were all reached through technology mediated environments, resulting with participants who are more familiar with technology which makes the results difficult to generalize to a larger population. Sample was strongly biased towards one gender and was not evenly distributed in terms of demographic characteristics such as age group, educational level and work status. The data relied solely on survey responses whereas a follow up interview could have provided more insight about the participants' experiences.

However, despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights regarding Turkish speaking adult mobile device owners' use of foreign language apps. Although, there is a wealth of foreign language apps available on the market, half of the respondents indicated that they did not use them. A significant number of nonusers still was not aware of the presence of language learning apps, an important percentage did not feel comfortable using them and those users who started using apps in their language learning process tended to stop continuing to do so. Those who used mobile device apps preferred them mostly because of the rich input and enhanced exposure the target language and quick, and easy access to language learning apps provided. However, in average, participants reported to use them "every now and then" and rated the efficiency of the apps on their learning as medium.

In line with previous research (Demouy, & Kukulska-Hulme, 2010; Demouy et al, 2015; Ducate, & Lomicka, 2013; Nino, 2015) those who use apps indicated that they benefited from more passive language activities such as listening to audio, grammar and pronunciation exercises, reading texts, vocabulary flashcards and answering tests rather than doing contextualized activities that involved interaction and communication. Distinctive affordances of mobile technologies like mobility, enhanced interactivity and connectivity, instant data sharing, and automatic voice recognition that can allow a more communicative and collaborative language learning experience were used rarely. Two reasons may exist behind this underuse. The first one is related to the instructional design of the mobile learning apps. Although not enough in number, the few studies (Burston, 2014b; Guo, 2013; Heil et al., 2016) which examined popular language learning apps came to the conclusion that a great majority of apps were designed based on the premises of behavoirist and teacher-centered learning approach rather than communicative, task-based or social-constructivist approaches; presenting isolated grammar and vocabulary drills through extensive repetitions and recycling with the aim of helping users eventually acquire them. The results of this survey also support these claims as the responses given to close-ended questions show that participants were mainly engaged with more behaviorist language activities and a high proportion of comments to the open-ended questions drew attention to the lack of interactivity, contextualization and opportunities for communication in the apps. These limitations were parallel to the limitations found in earlier research (Loewen et al., 2019; Malerba 2015; Niño, 2015).

The second reason for the underexploitation of mobile devices and the underuse of mobile language learning apps in general might be a lack of well-defined guidelines on how to effectively use mobile learning information systems to support or enhance individuals' self-directed learning experiences. As Blake (2008) argues technology itself does not constitute a methodology and "any activity without adequate pedagogical planning—technologically enhanced or not—will produce unsatisfactory results with students, even if it is attractive from a multimedia point of view (e.g., colors, graphics, photos, video, sound)" (p. 11). Malerba's (2015) finding that those who were already independent learners took advantage of more communicative aspects of apps while the others did not show the importance of providing support to learners. Despite the obvious benefits of mobile device apps in providing learners much more control over their choice of content, pace and learning pattern, many learners may benefit from a more gradual transition from teacher directed learning to app-based self-directed learning, especially in terms of exploitation of interactivity and collaboration. The mere access to mobile technologies and apps is not enough to transform learnersinto autonomous language learners who successfully exploit the highly communicative features of these devices. Along with Chen's (2013) and Mason and Wenxin's (2017) arguments, learners may need methodological guidance as well as technological training for efficient app use. Furthermore, language learning apps can make use of game-like features to keep learners engaged in daily learning activities.

Overall, mobile language learning apps which have an ever-growing market have a strong potential to overcome the constraints exposed on learners in traditional language classroom such as limited time, space, input, communication and opportunities. They can address different learner needs and individualize instruction with the adaptivity affordance and can boost learner motivation through features like gamification. However, more research is needed to actually examine the apps' framework of instructional design and to what extent each design corresponds to the needs of various learner groups who intend to regulate their own learning. Also, further research

that analyzes whether the use of apps factually results in increased learning gains when used as self-access materials outside of the classroom is needed.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

1. Giriş

Yabancı dil eğitimi sürekli bir değişimden geçmekte ve kendini yenilemektedir. Mobil teknolojiler de kendine has özellikleri ve sağlarlığı ile son yıllarda yabancı dil eğitimi alanında ciddi bir ivme kazanmış durumdadır. Mobil cihazlar, bir yandan zengin ve çeşitli öğretim malzemelerine erişim imkânını arttırıken, öte yandan eğitimi zaman ve mekân kısıtlarından kurtarma potansiyeline sahiptir.

Yabancı dil eğitimine dair güncel yaklaşımlar, dilsel olarak zengin bir girdiye sahip ortamların, iletişim dilinin farklı türlerde etkileşimsel geri bildirimlerle anlamlandırılması yoluyla üretilmesi için sık sık fırsatların yaratılmasının ve yeni dil öğelerinin öğrenci tarafından farkına varılmasına olanak sağlamanın önemini vurgulamakta; öğrencilerin dil öğrenimini hem duyuşsal ve hem de bilişsel olarak deneyimlemeleri gerektiğini öne sürmektedir.

Öğretmen merkezli bir öğretim çerçevesi olarak davranışçılık, uzun bir süre dil öğretim yaklaşımlarına egemen olmuştur. Bu anlayışta dilin temel kuralları, kavramları, kelime ve cümle yapıları üzerinde önemle durulur ve bunlar tekrar, taklit, ezberleme ve şartlandırma yoluyla öğretilir. Oysa, güncel yabancı dil öğretiminde en çok kullanılan yaklaşımlar, öncelikle dilin iletişimsel yeterliliğine odaklanan metodolojiler olarak görünmektedir ve bu amaçla, güncel öğretim teknikleri, öğrencilerin dili anlamlı amaçlar için pragmatik, otantik ve işlevsel olarak kullanmasını sağlamak üzere tasarlanmıştır. Öğrencinin kendi öğrenme sürecine aktif katılımı ve anlam müzakere etme, etkileşim kurma ve hedef dilde diğer kullanıcılarla işbirliği yapma fırsatları bu çerçevede önemlidir. Dahası, son yıllarda sosyal bilişsel bakış açısı, dil öğrenmenin sosyal bir pratik olduğunu ve bireyin ikinci dil bilgisini akranlarıyla birlikte anlamlı bir sosyal etkileşim yoluyla inşa etme sürecinin sonucu olduğunu ileri sürmektedir.

Yansıma, motivasyon, öğrenci katılımı ve öğrenci özerkliğini teşvik eden öğrenme ortamları da etkili dil öğrenimi için de önemli unsurlardır. Öğrencilerin kendi hızlarına göre ilerleyebilmelerine, bireysel olarak çalışabilmelerine ve öz-değerlendirme yoluyla kendi öğrenmeleri üzerine yansıma yapmalarına olanak sağlayan öğrenme ortamları ve platformlar öğrencilerin bireysel farklılıklarını ve ihtiyaçlarını karşılayabilir ve dil öğrenen kişinin öğrenme arzusunu ve yeteneğini arttırabilir.

Mobil teknolojiler, öğrencilerin geleneksel dil sınıflarında yaşadıkları sınırlamaların ve engellerin birçoğunun üstesinden gelmelerine yardımcı olma potansiyeline sahiptir. İnternet bağlantısı ve başkalarıyla her zaman ve her yerde bağlantı, geleneksel sınıf ortamından hem nicelik hem de nitelik bakımından daha zengin ve çeşitli girdi ve çıktı olanakları sunma; işitsel ve metinsel tekrarlama, hız ve ses modifikasyonu, renk kullanımı, grafikler, animasyonlar, duyarlı dokunmatik ekranlar, akustik geliştirmeler, girdi iyileştirme ve modifikasyonu gibi kapsamlı özellikler ile hedef formların öğrenen tarafından fark edilmesi olasılığını arttırmaktadır.

Küresel olarak, dijital dil öğretim araçları için talep gittikçe artmakta ve mobil cihazlarda uygulama tabanlı öğrenim popüler bir yöntem olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Mobil uygulamalar mobil cihazlarda çalışan ve genellikle sınırlı bir işlevi olan belirli bir bilgisayar yazılımı türüdür. Bu uygulamalar aracılığıyla en modern multimedya teknolojisi ile sunulan dil öğrenim materyallerine düşük maliyetli erişim, formel öğrenme ortamlarında önemli miktarda zaman harcamak zorunda kalmadan, bireyin hemen öğrenmesi gereken şeyi ve öğrenme sırasını seçebilme esnekliği, kendi içinde bütün olan 10-15 dakikalık modüller dil öğrenimi için cazip ve uygun bir yol sunmaktadır. Uygulamalarda kullanılan oyunlaştırma, rekabet, işbirliği, keşif ve hikâye anlatımı gibi özellikler, öğrenmeyi eğlenceli ve ilgi çekici hale getirmekte; öğrencilerin pratik yaparken kendi hızlarına göre ilerleyip, bireysel geri dönüt alabilmeleri uygulamaları tüm seviyelerdeki dil öğrencileri için çekici kılmaktadır.

Özellikle yabancı dil öğretmek için çok sayıda uygulama geliştirilmektedir. Ancak, bir mobil dil öğrenme uygulaması tasarlamak ve geliştirmek çok yönlü ve zorlu bir iştir. Yazılım programlama bilgisi, etkili grafik tasarımı bilgisi, yabancı dil öğretiminin yukarıda bahsedilen pedagojik prensipleri ile birleştirilmelidir. Ancak, popüler dil öğretim uygulamalarını inceleyen çalışmalar uygulamaların daha çok bağlam dışı şekilde, tek başına kelime öğretimi, aşamalı olarak dilbilgisi öğretimi üzerinde durduğunu ve etkili iletişim kurma amacının geri planda kaldığını göstermiştir.

2. Yöntem

Mobil yabancı dil uygulamaları Türkiye'de de yaygın olarak piyasaya sürülse de, uygulamaların yetişkin kullanıcılar tarafından sınıf dışında, öz-yönelimli bir öğrenme deneyiminin parçası olarak mevcut kullanımları ile ilgili yapılmış neredeyse hiç araştırma yoktur. Bu nedenle, bu araştırmanın amacı, bir anket çalışması ile Türkiye'deki mobil cihaz sahiplerinin mobil dil öğrenme uygulamalarının kullanımının kapsamını incelemek ve yabancı dil öğretim uygulamalarını kullanma deneyimlerini araştırmaktır. 22 maddelik geliştirilen anket, mobil cihaz sahiplerinin sosyodemografik özelliklerini, deneyimlerini ve yabancı dil öğretimi uygulamalarının kullanımının/kullanılmamasının nedenlerini, algılanan etkililiğini, güçlü ve zayıf yönlerini ve uygulamaları

geliştirmeye yönelik kullanıcı önerilerini değerlendirmek amacıyla Türkçe olarak tasarlanmıştır. Potansiyel katılımcılara çevrimiçi forum, Facebook ve Twitter güncellemeleri aracılığıyla ulaşılmış ve ankete gönüllü olarak cevap vermeye davet edilmişlerdir. Anketteki kapalı uçlu maddeler betimleyici istatistik yöntemleri kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Anketin açık uçlu soruları yoluyla toplanan nitel veriler için ise Miles & Huberman'ın (1994) Değerlendirme Kodlama çerçevesinin kullanılmıştır. İki kodlayıcı verileri incelemiş ve aralarında % 85'lik bir güvenilirlikle genel kategorileri belirlemişlerdir.

3. Bulgular ve Sonuç

Mobil cihaz sahibi olan, % 84'ü kadın, %16'sı erkek olmak üzere toplam 177 Türk katılımcı, araştırmayı gönüllü olarak olarak yanıtlamıştır. Her ne kadar, çok sayıda yabancı dil uygulaması mevcut bulunsa da, katılımcıların yarısı bunları kullanmadıklarını belirtmiştir. Dil öğrenimi uygulamalarının varlığı konusunda hâlâ önemli bir miktarda kullanıcının bilgisi olmadığı, dil öğrenme sürecindeki mobil uygulamalardan yararlanmaya çalışan kullanıcıların önemli bir yüzdesinin de kullanmayı sürdürmediği görülmüştür. Mobil cihaz uygulamalarını kullananlar, çoğunlukla, hedef dildeki zengin girdidaha fazla maruziyet ve dil öğrenimine hızlı ve kolay erişim nedeniyle onları tercih ettiklerin belirttiler. Bunula birlikte, katılımcıların çoğu uygulamaları "nadiren, arada sırada" kullandıklarını belirtirken uygulamaların dil öğrenimindeki etkinliğini orta olarak değerlendirdiler.

Genel olarak, bu çalışmada da mobil dil öğrenme uygulamalarının, dil öğrenmek isteyenlerin maruz kaldığı zaman, mekân, dilsel girdi gibi eksiklerin üstesinden gelmek için güçlü bir potansiyele sahip olduğu; farklı öğrenci ihtiyaçlarını ele alarak öğretimi kişiselleştirebildiği ve öğrenim motivasyonunu oyunlaştırma gibi özelliklerle artırabildiği görülmüştür. Ancak, önceki araştırmalar ile paralel olarak, uygulamaları kullanan kişiler, etkileşim ve iletişim içeren bağlamsal faaliyetler yapmak yerine, daha çok dinleme, dilbilgisi, telaffuz ve kelime egzersizleri, metin okuma ve test çözme gibi daha pasif dil etkinliklerinden yararlandıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Mobil teknolojilerin mobilite, gelişmiş etkileşim ve bağlanabilirlik, anında veri paylaşımı, otomatik ses tanıma gibi daha iletişim tabanlı ve işbirlikçi bir dil öğrenme deneyimine olanak tanıyabilecek özelliklerinin nadiren kullanıldığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bunun sebepleri arasında, önceki araştırmaların da gösterdiği gibi, uygulamaların daha davranışçı eğitim anlayışı ile tasarlanmış olması ve öğrenenlerin öz-yönetimli öğrenme deneyimlerini desteklemek veya arttırmak için mobil öğrenme bilgi sistemlerini kullanma konusunda iyi tanımlanmış bir kılavuza ya da sürece ihtiyaç duymaları olabilir. Mobil teknolojilere ve uygulamalara sadece erişim sağlanmasının, öğrencileri bu cihazların son derece iletişimsel özelliklerini başarıyla kullanan özerk dil öğrencilerine dönüştürmek için yeterli olmadığı ortadadır.

ETİK BEYANNAME

Bu çalışmanın araştırma ve yazım sürecinde araştırmacı tarafından bilimsel ve etik kurallara uyulduğunu, farklı eserlerden yararlanılması durumunda atıfta bulunulduğunu, kullanılan verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapılmadığını, araştırmanın tamamının veya bir kısmının farklı bir akademik yayın platformuna yayımlanmak üzere gönderilmediğini, belirtilen konularda araştırmanın yazarının bilgi sahibi olduğunu ve gerekli kurallara uyulduğunu beyan ederim. 24/08/2020

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Araştırmanın Sorumlu Yazarı