A Selection of Mobile Applications in Learning English between High and Low Proficient EFL Learners in a Thai Institute

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Abstract

Mobile learning is a new type of learning that allows learners to access any knowledge, skills, and numerous learning resources independently. It has become a helpful tool for language learners to develop their language skills since there are many kinds of free applications which learners can download and use anywhere and anytime. However, the language learners might be unwilling to use mobile applications if there is poor network connectivity, and the applications are not user-friendly and varied. The purposes of this study were to examine the students' selection of mobile applications in learning English and to compare the differences between high and low proficient English learners in their application usage and their progress after using the applications. The participants were 105 second-year Business Japanese students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology. They consisted of 48 high proficient English learners and 57 low proficient English learners. A 38-item self-report questionnaire was used to collect the data. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics and independent-samples T-Test were used. The results revealed that the mobile applications the students preferred to use in order to learn English were Google Translate, Dictionaries, and YouTube. They used the applications for translating words and sentences from English into Thai the most (M = 4.18). Moreover, there was a significant difference between two groups of the students in acquiring new vocabulary at .05 significant level (p = .035).

Keywords: EFL Learners, High and Low Learners, MALL, Mobile Applications, Students' Perceptions

Introduction

The advent of mobile technology and the internet has been embedded in all aspects of learning. In foreign language learning, mobile learning has captured the scholars' interests and has been integrated into classes worldwide. Lefrere, Malley, and Sharples (2004) define mobile learning as a new learning approach occurring when learners are not necessarily in particular locations; but they can learn by using mobile technologies and the internet. Crompton (2013) describes that learners can have countless opportunities to learn across multiple contexts and learn through social and content interactions via their personal electronic devices. By using the devices, learners can access any knowledge, skills and learning resources that they want spontaneously. The typical personal electronic devices are handheld computers which are light-weight, private, portable, and often cutting-edge such as cell phones, smartphones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), tablet PCs, laptops, and MP3/MP4 players (Kukulska-Hulme, 2013).

Pegrum (2014) explains that integrating mobile devices in language learning relates to three kinds of mobility. Firstly, the mobility of the devices refers to connected classrooms where students use their own mobile devices or use the devices provided by their teachers to learn, create, and consume the contents via the internet. Secondly, the mobility of the learners refers to the characteristics of the learners who are active, brave, co-operative, and fully engaged in any learning activities. Lastly, the mobility of learning experiences refers to diverse information in real-world contexts in which students can experience variety of contents through authentic materials. Applying the authentic materials in language classes is valuable. It increases the students' motivation to learn and to develop their target language, and it stimulates them to understand the different cultures of other countries where English is spoken (Richards, 2001).

However, there are some restrictions in integrating mobile learning to support language learning. Firstly, the students need to be knowledgeable about technology and be skillful in ICT skills. They need to know their mobiles' features and know how to choose and use proper applications suiting their language proficiency levels. Secondly, smartphones are costly; have limited memory storage; have a small screen size; and their batteries are not long-lasting if the learners do many activities on their mobiles. Finally, the students can be upset, feeling frustrated, and reluctant to use the applications via their mobiles if there is poor network connectivity (Nashwa-Ahmed, 2015). Consequently, language teachers should understand the characteristics and disadvantages of applying mobile learning in their classes.

Then they can advise their students to select the suitable applications to develop their language skills freely and more effectively.

Using mobile applications for learning foreign languages is beneficial for language learners. Walker and White (2013) explain that the use of technology and smartphones broadens the communication and interaction opportunity between people. This benefits second-language learners to improve their language skills. According to Vygotsky's theory, it assumes that all cognitive development and language development resulting from social interactions between individuals, and learning takes place within the "*zone of proximal development*". The learners can progress to higher levels of linguistic knowledge when they collaborate and interact with someone who is a little more capable of the target language than he is. "Vygotsky reasoned that collaboration that allows learning to take place within the ZPD provides a structure that supports the learner whilst the knowledge is being built." (p. 8). This is similar to Krashen's i + 1 theory which claims that a second language learner can develop his language skills when he receives input (language that he hears or reads) at a slightly higher level than he can produce.

Furthermore, mobile learning fosters learner autonomy which leads a learner to become a successful language learner. Holec (1981) states that an autonomous learner is someone who is responsible for his own learning and can make a decision on what he needs to study. Benson (2001) mentions that an autonomous learner can choose the contents he wants to study freely and can choose when and where he wants to study. Richards (2015) explains that with the use of internet and smartphones, mobile learning offers many benefits for language learners. For example, it supports different ways of learning; it's suitable for learners of different abilities; it provides interaction opportunities and different types of feedback; it supports individualized learning and provides a stress-reduced learning environment. Mobile learning supports learners to become proficient language users.

There have been several studies that explored the students' perceptions in using mobile applications to support their language learning and their behaviors in using the internet. For instance, Steel (2012) investigated 134 language students' perspectives on benefits of using mobile applications. The findings indicated that most students appreciated the flexibility and convenience of using language applications to meet their personal needs. The students reported that using the mobile applications frequently could improve their language skills, such as vocabulary, reading, writing, grammar, and translation tasks. The

applications the students used most were dictionaries, translators, and verb conjugators. Bolliger, Mills, White, and Kohyama (2015) examined the perceptions of Japanese college students towards the use of digital games in English learning. The results revealed that most students had the positive attitudes towards using the digital games in English classes. They viewed the games as easy to use and enjoyable; and they felt more enthusiastic to learn English and more excited with the lessons. Moreover, Electronic Transactions Development Agency in Thailand conducted a report on the behaviors of internet users in Thailand in 2018 (ETDA, 2018). The findings revealed that Thai users used social networking sites 3 hours per day, and the most popular applications which Thai users used were YouTube, Line, and Facebook. Gen Y and Gen Z people ranked YouTube as the number one. This showed that they preferred to watch entertaining clips. Chuachai (2018) proposed that using social networking sites, such as Facebook, Line, and YouTube, is an attractive learning tool for Thai learners because they are accessible, stimulating, and useful for learners in any academic fields. Samarak, Wannapiroon, and Piriyasurawong (2015) supported this insight that integrating clips from YouTube in classes could develop students' critical thinking skills and the students paid more attention to the lessons.

As a result, investigating the students' perceptions and their behaviors in using mobile applications for learning English is crucial. It enables the teachers to design the lessons and select the appealing learning materials suited to the students' learning preferences. Nunan (1988) states that teachers cannot teach their students everything they need to know due to time constraints. Successful language learners are autonomous learners who can manage their own learning capability by locating their goals and selecting their preferred learning styles (Ellis, 1994). Therefore, the purposes of this study were to examine the students' selection of mobile applications in learning English and to compare the differences between high and low proficient English learners in their application usage and their progress after using the applications. The findings will provide useful information for language teachers to integrate mobile applications into their classes and to recommend the students interesting applications with which they can practice English independently. These may also be valuable for application developers who will create and evolve new learning applications to support language learning theories in the near future.

Research Questions

1) What mobile applications did the second-year Business Japanese students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology prefer to use in English learning?

2) What was a difference in using their favorite applications to learn English between high and low proficient English learners?

3) How did the students assess their English skills after using their preferred applications?

Methodology

Population and Participants

The population in this study was a total of 132 second year students who enrolled in ENL-201: English for Communication 3 in the first semester in 2018 during June, 18 – October, 5, 2018. They are majoring in Business Japanese in the faculty of Business Administration at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology. The participants were selected by the simple random sampling technique at 0.5 confidence level. They were 105 Business Japanese students consisting of 36 males (34.3%) and 69 females (65.7%) Their average age was 19-20 years. The participants were divided into two groups based on their average English grade level from two English compulsory subjects ranging from A to D+. There were the high proficient learners (48 students: 45.7%) receiving grade A and B+ and the low proficient learners (57 students: 54.3%) receiving grade B, C+, C, and D+. The participants agreed to use mobile applications in learning English.

Research Instrument

A 38-item self-report questionnaire, which was developed by a researcher, was used to collect the data. Before distributing the questionnaire to the participants, it was piloted with 35 students and it had the reliability (α) at .88. In this study, the self-report questionnaire had high reliability (α) at .89. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: the first part was to gather the participants' personal data, such as their gender, age, average grade in English subjects, and the usage of mobile applications in learning English. For example, how often do you use mobile applications in learning English?; how many applications are you using?; and what are your favorite mobile applications in learning English? The second part was to discover the participants' purposes in using the applications for learning English. It consisted of 20 items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-5, that is, 1 = never use, 2 = rarely

use, 3 = sometimes use, 4 = often use, and 5 = always use. The last part was self-evaluation, including how much the participants progressed in their English skills after they have used the applications. It consisted of 18 items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-5, namely, 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for Microsoft Windows 11.5 was used. Descriptive Statistics including frequencies, means (M), standard deviations (SD) were employed to investigate the participants' personal data, the participants' behaviors in using mobile applications for learning English, their purposes in using the applications, and their self-evaluation in learning English. Then Independent-Samples T-test was used for examining the differences in using the applications between high and low proficient English learners.

Results

1) **What mobile applications did the second-year Business Japanese students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology prefer to use in English learning?**

Descriptive statistics was used to examine the number of mobile applications the participants selected to use in learning English. There were 2-4 applications most participants used (82 students: 78.1%). There were 40 participants (38.1%) consisting of 19 high proficient English learners and 21 low proficient English learners who reported that they used 3 applications, 22 participants (21.0%) consisting of 7 high proficient English learners and 15 low proficient English learners who used 4 applications, and 20 participants (19.0%) consisting of 8 high proficient English learners and 12 low proficient English learners who used 2 applications. Most importantly, the mobile applications most participants (62 students: 59.0%) consisting of 31 high proficient English learners and 31 low proficient English learners preferred to use in learning English were Google Translate, Dictionaries, and YouTube. The participants reported that they often used Google Translate when they couldn't think of words in English and didn't know vocabulary when reading English texts. They preferred to use it because it was easy to use. Users can type words or sentences in any languages, or they can photograph the texts and the messages that they want to translate. Then Google Translate will translate them into the desired language. Nevertheless, six high

proficient English learners agreed that Google Translate was sometimes unreliable because it depicted the words they hadn't seen or known before. Furthermore, their favorite YouTube channels for learning English were diverse, but their contents focused on daily life topics and entertainment. Table 1 presents the types of mobile applications the participants preferred using to learn English.

Table 1: Top Four of Mobile Application Types Students Preferred Using

Types of Mobile Applications	Students' Selection	Number of the Students	Percentage (%)
Dictionaries (English-Thai / Thai-English)	1. Longdo Dictionary	25	23.8%
	2. Google Translate	17	16.1%
	3. Thai Fast Dictionary	13	12.3%
	4. Famous Dictionaries: Macmillan, Oxford, Merriam Webster, Cambridge	7	6.6%
YouTube Channels	1. Loukgolf's English Room	23	21.9%
	2. Peachii	23	21.9%
	3. Adam Bradshaw	9	8.5%
	4. Music Videos with lyrics	7	6.6%
Other applications	1. BBC Learning English	14	13.3%
	2. TOEIC Listening Practice	11	10.4%
	3. TED Talks	10	9.5%
	4. Netflix	10	9.5%

2) What was a difference in using their favorite applications to learn English between high and low proficient English learners?

First of all, descriptive statistics was used to discover the participants' practice time in using their favorite mobile applications to learn English. Their practice time varied from a few times a week to once a month. Most participants spent a few times a month, once a week, and a few times a week (80 students: 76.2%). There were 40 participants (38.1%) consisting of 19 high proficient English learners and 21 low proficient English learners who used the applications 2-3 times a week, 21 participants (20.0%) consisting of 7 high proficient English

learners and 14 low proficient English learners who used the applications once a week or four times a month, and 19 participants (18.1%) consisting of 8 high proficient English learners and 11 low proficient English learners who used the applications 2-3 times a month. Obviously, low proficient English learners spent more time on the applications than high proficient English learners. Table 2 illustrates practice time in using their favorite applications to learn English between high and low proficient English learners.

Table 2: Learners' Practice Time in Using their Favorite Mobile Applications

	Practice Time between High and Low Learners		
	2-3 times a month	4 times a month	2-3 times a week
High Learners	8 students (7.6%)	7 students (6.7%)	19 students (18.1%)
Low Learners	11 students (10.5%)	14 students (13.3%)	21 students (20.0%)
Sum of High and Low Learners	19 students (18.1%)	21 students (20.0%)	40 students (38.1%)

Note. Total number of the students is 80 students (76.2%).

Descriptive statistics was also used to explore the participants' purposes in using their favored applications to learn English. The findings indicated that high and low proficient English learners had the similar purposes in using the applications for learning English (High Learners: M = 3.58, Low Learners: M = 3.55). The participants' three main purposes in using the applications were to translate the unknown words, expressions, idioms, phrases, and sentences from English into Thai (High Learners: M = 4.29, Low Learners: M = 4.08), to acquire new vocabulary (High Learners: M = 4.08, Low Learners: M = 3.81), and to practice listening skills (High Learners: M = 3.94, Low Learners: M = 3.92). Then Independent-Sample T-test was used to analyze the difference of purposes in using mobile applications for learning English between two groups of the participants. The findings indicated that there was no significant difference between high and low proficient English learners and their overall purposes in using mobile applications for learning English at .05 significant level (p = .744). However, there was a significant difference between high and low proficient English learners and their purpose in obtaining new vocabulary at .05 significant level (p = .035) as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Results on Differences between High and Low Proficient English Learners and their Purposes in Using Mobile Applications for Learning English (N = 105)

Purposes in Using Mobile Applications	Groups of the Students	Level of Mobile Application Usage	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
1. Translating the unknown words	High Learners Low Learners	High	4.29 4.08	.71 .79	1.376	.172
2. Gaining new vocabulary	High Learners Low Learners	High	4.08 3.81	.62 .63	2.141	**.035***
3. Practicing Listening Skills	High Learners Low Learners	High	3.94 3.92	.71 .82	.118	.906
4. Communication	High Learners Low Learners	High	3.60 3.59	.82 .86	.073	.942
5. Personal Reasons: Playing Games, Taking Standardized Tests and Practicing Public Speaking	High Learners Low Learners	Medium	3.25 3.29	.93 .91	-.228	.820
6. Practicing Grammar	High Learners Low Learners	Medium	3.01 3.09	1.08 .94	-.434	.665
7. Practicing Listening and Reading Skills	High Learners Low Learners	Medium	2.92 3.04	.98 1.15	-.550	.584
Overall Purposes in Using Applications	**High Learners** **Low Learners**	**High**	**3.58** **3.55**	**.54** **.58**	**.328**	**.744**

*p < .05

In addition, the four highest items which the participants ranked about their purposes in using the applications were as follows. First was item 1, *"I use an application for searching the meanings, definitions, and expressions which I don't know in Thai."* (High Learners: M = 4.81, Low Learners: M = 4.66). Next item was item 2, *"I use an application for translating words, phrases, and sentences which I don't know their meanings in Thai."* (High Learners: M = 4.43, Low Learners: M = 4.35), followed by item 13, *"I use an*

application for practicing listening skills by listening to English songs." (High Learners: M = 4.43, Low Learners: M = 4.35). Finally, it was item 15, "*I use an application for communication and learn different cultures of native English speakers through watching films, series, and variety shows."* (High Learners: M = 4.39, Low Learners: M = 4.22).

3) **How did the students assess their English skills after using their preferred applications?**

Descriptive statistics was used to examine the self-evaluation of the second-year Business Japanese students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology after using their preferred mobile applications for learning English. Most students (58 students: 55.2%) consisting of 27 high proficient English learners and 31 low proficient English learners evaluated that their English skills were improved after using the applications. In addition to that, there were 29 participants (27.6%) consisting of 13 high proficient English learners and 16 low proficient English learners who assessed that their English skills improved much better, whereas 16 participants (15.2%) consisting of 7 high proficient English learners and 9 low proficient English learners assessed that their English skills improved a little after using the applications. However, there were a low proficient English learner (1 student: 1.8%) who thought that her English skills were not different from a prior practice, and a high proficient English learner (1 student: 2.1%) who believed that his English skills were worsened. Figure 1 shows the number of the participants' self-evaluation of their English skills after using their preferred mobile applications.
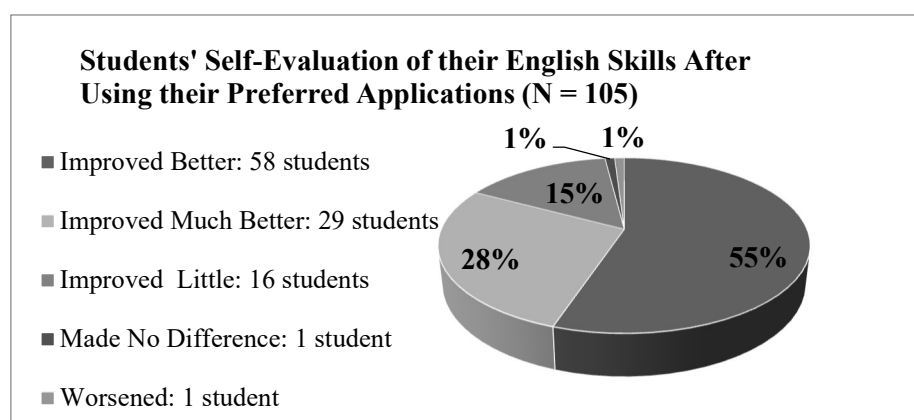

Students' Self-Evaluation of their English Skills After Using their Preferred Applications (N = 105)

- Improved Better: 58 students
- Improved Much Better: 29 students
- Improved Little: 16 students
- Made No Difference: 1 student
- Worsened: 1 student

1%   1%
15%
28%
55%

Figure 1: Participants' Self-Evaluation of their English Skills after Using their Preferred Applications (N = 105)

Specifically, both high and low proficient English learners agreed that they gained several advantages in using their favorite applications (M = 3.83). The advantages are categorized into three main categories. Firstly, the participants improved some specific English skills (High Learners: M = 3.93, Low Learners: M = 3.88), such as remembering and recalling the vocabularies, expressions, and idioms; recognizing their meanings and functions, writing correct sentences, improving translating skills, having a better pronunciation, being able to initiate and maintain conversations, and giving oral presentations better. Secondly, the participants had more confidence and motivation to learn English (High Learners: M = 3.93, Low Learners: M = 3.78). For example, they could understand the cultures of English speaking countries better; they could travel and survive in overseas countries without any worries about language communication; and they could perform well in examinations in English. Lastly, the participants improved four basic English skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing (High Learners: M = 3.77, Low Learners: M = 3.71). The participants assessed that they could read faster, discriminate between sounds and identify words, understand the main points, communicate better, and write paragraphs more correctly and orderly. Table 4 presents the advantages of using the participants' favorite applications to learn English via their mobiles.

Table 4: The Advantages of Using the Participants' Favorite Applications

Advantages in Using Mobile Applications	Total Mean	SD	Group of the Students (M)	SD	Level of English Improvement
1. Improve specific English skills	3.90	.53	High 3.93 Low 3.88	.50 .56	High
2. Gain more confidence and the motivation to learn English	3.85	.73	High 3.93 Low 3.78	.72 .74	High
3. Improve four basic English skills	3.74	.74	High 3.77 Low 3.71	.69 .78	High
Overall Advantages	**3.83**	**.58**	High 3.88 Low 3.79	.54 .62	High

The four highest items which high proficient English learners ranked about the advantages of using their preferred applications were item 2, *"I can know and understand the meanings of the vocabularies and expressions."* (M = 4.52), followed by item 17, *"I can travel overseas and survive in countries with confidence."* (M = 4.33), then item 1, *"I can remember and recall the vocabularies."* (M = 4.31), and finally item 11, *"I can understand the foreign media better such as books, articles, TV shows, films, series, and songs without asking anybody."* (M = 4.22). Unlike high proficient English learners, the four highest items which low proficient English learners ranked were item 2, *"I can know and understand the meanings of the vocabularies and expressions."* (M = 4.40), followed by item 1, *"I can remember and recall the vocabularies."* (M = 4.21), then item 7, *"I can improve my listening skills by differentiating the words and identifying the main ideas."* (M = 4.14), and lastly item 15, *"I am inspired to be fluent in English and want to improve my English skills."* (M = 4.10).

Discussion

1) **What mobile applications did the second-year Business Japanese students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology prefer to use in English learning?**

The results revealed that there were 3 mobile applications – Google Translate, Dictionaries, and YouTube, which most students, consisting of 31 high proficient English learners and 31 low proficient English learners (62 students: 59.0%), preferred to use in learning English. Dictionaries most participants used were Longdo Dictionary (25 students: 23.8%); Google Translate (17 students: 16.1%); and Thai Fast Dictionary (13 students: 12.3%). They are free downloading applications and convenient to use. Users can type words in Thai or English, and then the applications translate them with their meaning functions and pronunciation provided. Thai Fast Dictionary is different. It provides pictures of the requested words which help users understand the meanings of the words easier. The participants used them when they encountered unknown words in English; and when they couldn't think of English words to communicate. This is comparable to Steel's research indicating that language students preferred to use dictionaries and translators via their mobiles because the applications were free and useful for them to check the meanings of vocabulary whenever they needed to (Steel, 2012).

Furthermore, YouTube channels the participants preferred were Loukgolf's English Room (23 students: 21.9%) and Peachii (23 students: 21.9%). ETDA (2018) explains that Gen Z students (anyone who was born after 1995) like to watch entertaining clips on YouTube. Both channels are alike. They are accessible, educational and enjoyable which are suitable for learners to learn English (Chuachai, 2018). Their contents involve English in the real world by which learners can recognize the varieties of English from different English users and they can realize the cultures of English Speaking countries (Richards, 2001; Pegrum, 2014). Loukgolf's English Room is an English interview program providing English and Thai subtitles for viewers at the same time. Each episode lasts about 40 minutes. Peachii channel presents her lifestyle in England and some interesting vocabularies and idioms in real situations. Each clip lasts about 10-15 minutes. By watching their clips, learners gradually improved their English skills, such as by acquiring new vocabulary, practicing pronunciation, and improving communication skills since they have learnt from different people who are more competent in English than them (Walker & White, 2013).

Besides, the participants chose various kinds of mobile applications that suited their needs, interests, and available time to practice, such as BBC Learning English, TOEIC Listening Practice, TED Talks, and Netflix. For example, BBC Learning English provides different topics, programs, and skills for users to practice, such as Everyday English, Business English, Learn with the news, and Learn with drama. Users can choose freely and each topic lasts 1-6 minutes. Two participants stated that it was a useful and reliable application. Its contents were up-to-date. They didn't feel bored with it because each lesson was short; but British accents sometimes were difficult to understand. TED Talks is another example. It's an online talk compiling many different topics from many scholars and celebrity speakers. It allows users to select more than 110 languages subtitles, and each talk lasts from 3 minutes to 2 hours. A participant said that she enabled it because she wanted to improve listening skills. She always chose Thai subtitles and turned them on since Thai subtitles helped her understand the talks and learn new words. Therefore, the participants tended to be autonomous learners who were active, brave, and made their own decisions what English skills they wanted to improve and practice (Holec, 1981; Benson, 2001 & Pegrum, 2014).

2) **What was a difference in using their favorite applications to learn English between high and low proficient English learners?**

The findings indicated that most participants' practice time were different. There were 40 participants (38.1%) who spent 2-3 times a week on their favored mobile applications; 21 participants (20.0%) who used the applications once a week and 19 participants (18.1%) who used the applications 2-3 times a month. This implied that the participants were active learners and attempted to find the opportunities to practice and improve their English skills (Pegrum, 2014). Time spent in using the applications also accelerates language learning process. The more time learners spend on the learning tasks, the better English users they become. Research by Bolliger, Mills, White, and Kohyama (2015) supported that after Japanese students frequently used digital games via their mobiles, their English skills improved, and they were more motivated to learn English. For that reason, a frequent informal practice is required for language learners. It enables them to be competent language users (Kukulska-Hulme, 2013). Moreover, the findings showed that there was a significant difference between high and low proficient English learners and their purpose in gaining new vocabulary at .05 significant level (p = .035). Both groups used the applications for searching the meanings and the definitions of the unknown vocabulary and translating them into Thai. In Steel's research, Steel (2012) discovered that most students used language applications to increase their vocabulary and the applications assisted them to memorize more vocabularies and to access their meanings and contextual usage. Davies and Pearse (2000) stated that "vocabulary is often more important than grammar." (p. 59). If learners do not know the meanings of the words and their functions, they are going to have comprehension and communication problems which eventually lead them to be reluctant and demotivated to learn English. Nonetheless, Steel (2012) highlighted that acquiring vocabulary through mobile applications depends on the users' language proficiency level – beginner, intermediate, or advanced learners. Each group of learners recognizes the number of vocabulary and their functions differently.

3) **How did the students assess their English skills after using their preferred applications?**

The results showed that both high and low proficient English learners assessed that they could improve their English skills after using their preferred mobile applications. Most students (58 students: 55.2%) assessed that their English skills were improved, 29 participants (27.6%) thought that their English skills were much better, and 16 participants

(15.2%) believed that their English skills were a little better. This is consistent with Steel's research. Steel (2012) discovered that students who used language applications could improve their English skills such as increasing vocabulary, and improving reading, writing, and translating skills. As a result, the participants were successful language learners and autonomous learners because they could evaluate their language ability, identify their learning goals, and select their favorite applications to learn English independently (Ellis, 1994). They could decide what they wanted to learn, when they needed to learn, and where they learnt (Holec, 1981; Benson, 2001). Steel (2012) emphasized that students who personally used mobile applications to learn foreign languages should have self-discipline otherwise they could not make any progress in their learning. Learning English through favorite mobile applications is suitable for different learners who have different learning styles and language proficiency level. It allows learners to personalize their learning, and it is a stress-free learning environment (Richards, 2015). Therefore, it is important for teachers to be aware of mobile applications which their students are using for learning English, and they should provide the students the recommendation on the selection of good mobile applications supporting language learning. McCarthy (2016) suggests that a language learning application should be easy to use, have the variety and complexity of contents, offer different levels of exercises and tests, give corrective feedback to the users, and provide chances to interact with other proficient learners. With this suggestion, students can choose the suitable mobile applications to learn and develop their language skills independently and effectively.

Conclusion

The use of mobile applications in English learning is worthwhile. The findings proved that the applications the students selected to use individually can help them improve their English skills and support them to be autonomous learners. However, the learners need to be guided on how to choose and use the proper applications suited to their needs, interests, and language proficiency level, so that they can benefit from their preferred mobile applications and develop their English skills successfully.

Pedagogical Implications and Recommendation for Further Studies

The findings revealed that the participants' main purposes in using the mobile applications to learn English were translating the unknown words into Thai and obtaining new vocabulary. This implied that the participants lacked some vocabularies which caused

communication and comprehension problems. Thus, teachers' teaching techniques to present new vocabulary is essential. Davies and Pearse (2000) suggest that there are some aspects teachers need to realize when presenting new vocabulary. "These aspects are meaning, use in communication, pronunciation and spelling, and grammar." (p. 60). They explain that "It is usually best not to present meaning through translation first. Most vocabulary items can be presented clearly without translation, and other techniques involve the learners more and help them remember." (p. 69). Teachers can present new vocabulary by using real objects and pictures, doing demonstrations, giving definitions and examples, using mime, and using antonyms and synonyms to help the students understand the meanings of new words. Teachers should also present new words with pronunciation to students before the written forms so that the students can first recognize the pronunciation and the meanings of the words, and then they should explain the word functions and how to use them in sentences grammatically. Moreover, teachers should use cooperative and competitive activities to motivate the students to learn and remember the words quicker, such as brainstorming, guessing, and word quiz activities. There are many interesting mobile applications which teachers can use in their classes and recommend their students to use in order to increase their vocabulary – Vocabulary Builder, Vocabulary Test, Word Pictures, Word Search, Crossword Puzzle, Word Swipe, and English Spelling Quiz, etc. Last but not least, the findings could be useful for further studies on evaluations of learners' language proficiency and their language achievement after using the selected mobile applications on their separated English skills. Besides, they should examine factors affecting learners' selection of mobile applications to support their language learning.

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