

ULUSLARARASI SOSYAL ARAŐTIRMALAR DERGİSİ THE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL RESEARCH

Uluslararası Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi/The Journal of International Social Research

Cilt: 16 Sayı: 103 Ağustos 2023 & Volume: 16 Issue: 103 August 2023

Received: Aug 02, 2023, Manuscript No. jjsr-23-111670; Editor assigned: Aug 04, 2023, Pre-QC
No. jjsr-23-111670 (PQ); Reviewed: Aug 18, 2023, QC No. jjsr-23-111670; Revised: Aug 24, 2023,
Manuscript No. jjsr-23-111670 (R); Published: Aug 30, 2023, DOI: 10.17719/jjsr.2023.111670

www.sosyalarastirmalar.com ISSN: 1307-9581

Mobile-First Learning: A Comprehensive Study on Academic Performance and Social Presence

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Abstract

In the digital age, the integration of mobile technologies into education has reshaped the way we learn, transforming traditional classrooms into dynamic and flexible learning environments. This review article delves into a comprehensive study that delves deep into the realms of academic performance and social presence in the context of mobile-first learning. By exploring the findings and implications of this study, we gain valuable insights into the evolving landscape of education and its intersection with mobile technology. The ubiquity of mobile technologies has sparked interest in their potential impact. However, current research predominantly concentrates on adults, neglecting the younger demographic that is more profoundly immersed in mobile technologies. To bridge this gap, this study introduces a specialized instructional design, integrating the widely used application Duolingo into English classes, to explore the ramifications of mobile technologies on the academic performance and social presence of high school students in their initial years. Conducted within a private school where English is mandatory, the research adopts a mixed-method approach, with quantitative and qualitative facets. Data collection comprises a needs analysis, a standardized English test (KET), a social presence scale and follow-up interviews. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, 16 students each for the experimental and control groups. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight voluntary participants.

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Keywords: Academic performance, educational technology, mobile technologies, social presence, technology integration.

Introduction

The significant characteristics of mobile technologies such as ease of access to information, ability to create and share content, and ability to share information have paved the way for alternative approaches to the formation of a teaching and learning setting, and there is growing interest in exploring their potential contributions [1]. However, despite the swift proliferation of mobile technologies, the quantity of research endeavors exploring their utilization beyond conventional settings remains rather limited, particularly in comparison to the rapid expansion of these technologies. Yet, existing research tends to concentrate on adults, neglecting younger age groups, who are more immersed in mobile technologies. While efforts have been made to incorporate mobile technology-based learning within school education, as exemplified by studies such as, the actual adoption and integration of such approaches remain constrained. The body of research addressing barriers to mobile technology-based learning in primary and secondary education schools remains relatively restricted [2].

Needless to say, communication is the cornerstone of language education opening paths to more sharing and collaboration among people of almost all ages. Users prefer mobile learning because they want to communicate with one another in online communities by exchanging messages, opinions, information, images, and videos, which facilitate communication easily [3]. In this context, mobile learning refers to an educational experience that takes place through mobile devices, allowing students to participate regardless of their physical location or time. As the name suggests, MALL (mobile assisted language learning) is using mobile technologies to study languages. Considering the popularity and spread of devices such as tablets and smart phones, it can be claimed that exploring the efficacy and impact of them has become vital among researchers, especially when the research regarding implementation of MALL is rather limited and more research is needed.

The learning environment plays a vital role in shaping the outcomes of the learning process. To create effective learning environments, innovative perspectives are necessary. One crucial feature of such environments is the formation of learning communities that promote student participation and facilitate effective learning [4]. The significance of learning environment design becomes even more apparent when considering its impact on quality, especially in the context of learners not physically present in a classroom. Nevertheless, despite the significance of mobile learning applications, limited investigation has been conducted on the factors influencing their adoption. In the current landscape, while mobile



technologies have been expanding rapidly, there remains a substantial dearth of research encompassing diverse perspectives, particularly in light of their exponential growth. Therefore, the use of technological tools for educational purposes requires further investigation in various learning contexts and with diverse tools. Exploring these technological tools in different settings may enhance our understanding of their potential for supporting effective learning outcomes [5].

Understanding the mobile-first learning paradigm

Mobile-first learning signifies a significant departure from traditional educational models, leveraging the ubiquity and accessibility of mobile devices. The essence lies in crafting learning experiences tailored to the constraints and possibilities of smartphones and tablets, fostering a seamless transition between formal and informal learning settings. This paradigm shift necessitates a closer examination of how mobile-first learning influences academic outcomes and social interactions [6].

Methodology: A holistic approach

The featured comprehensive study adopts a two-stage approach, each focusing on a distinct facet of mobile-first learning. The first stage scrutinizes its influence on academic performance, while the second probes into its impact on social presence, thus encapsulating the diverse dimensions of this emerging educational landscape.

Enhancing academic performance

The first phase delves into the relationship between mobile-first learning and academic success. Through quantitative analysis of students' learning outcomes, this phase evaluates the efficacy of this novel approach [7]. Notably, it dispels conventional assumptions that mobile learning is inherently less effective due to screen size limitations.

Fostering social presence

In the second phase, the focus shifts to the often-overlooked aspect of social presence. Mobile-first learning environments, driven by real-time communication channels and collaborative tools, nurture a sense of community and engagement among learners, regardless of geographical distances [8].

Implications for the future of education



The comprehensive study on mobile-first learning brings forth several implications that resonate across educational institutions, instructors, and learners:

Pedagogical Design: Educators are encouraged to adopt strategies that harness the strengths of mobile devices, including bite-sized content and interactive learning activities [9].

Technological Integration: Institutions should embrace mobile-first platforms that facilitate seamless interaction and communication, supporting both academic and social aspects of learning.

Equity and Access: Attention must be given to ensuring equal access to mobile devices and digital resources for all learners.

Balancing Screen Time: Developing guidelines for maintaining a healthy balance between learning on mobile devices and other offline activities [10].

Conclusion

The intersection of mobile technology and education has given rise to a new era of learning. The comprehensive study explored in this review article reveals that mobile-first learning is not just a trend, but a transformative force with significant implications for academic performance and social interactions. As education continues to evolve, the insights derived from this study offer a guiding light, illuminating the path towards a more dynamic, accessible, and connected learning ecosystem.

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