Using Mobile Applications
for Independent Improvement of Listening Skills

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Listening is a very important language skill, not only for communication purposes but also in the process of learning a target language. When people learn a foreign language, listening plays a key role to all effective communication. Without the ability to listen effectively, messages can be inaccurately received and interpreted in the communication process which can lessen their effectiveness and, consequently, lead to misunderstandings. From my learning and teaching experience, listening skills are the most difficult to acquire. In particular, learners fail while listening to authentic material with different accents. Therefore, listening requires practice not only in EFL classes, but also independently. The purposes of our research are to find out the most effective mobile applications for developing listening skills independently and to assess them according to the criteria. Our research includes the following methods: literature review, observation and analysis. In conclusion, we have elaborated the most essential mobile programs on the basis of the application quality assessment criteria.

Nowadays people spend most their time in the world of the Internet: social networks, blogs, various electronic media resources that give them an opportunity to have unlimited access to various learning resources. Each new technology tends to lead to new learning prospects.

The teaching of foreign languages is an area that has undergone major changes as a result of rapid technological improvements. With the advent and rapid improvement of laptops the concept of "mobile learning" has gained popularity. Changes in mobile technology, the development of information technology and telecommunications have prompted educational participants to take an advantage of "anytime" and "anywhere" in learning and teaching language. The head of the State N. A. Nazarbayev in his "Message to the People of the Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy" emphasizes the modernization of teaching methods and the development of an online educational system. The use of mobile technologies and training applications allows us to further improve the pedagogical process. Many scientists and educators are confident that the future of training with ICT support is connected and depends on the spread of mobile communications, the popularity of smartphones and gadgets, the emergence of a large number of educational applications and programs, as well as new technologies that expand the possibilities and quality of education [1].

Mobile learning is any learning activity that primarily or exclusively uses portable devices — telephones, smartphones, tablets, sometimes laptops and the like, but not ordinary desktop computers. Language learning requires interaction and autonomy, which are the key concepts in FL learning using mobile technology. The goal of our study is to find out which of the selected applications meet the needs of ESL learners, and which of applications they would use for self-development of listening skills in the English language. **A mobile application** is a program installed on a particular platform that has certain functionality that allows you to perform various actions. We have chosen 5 best apps from the Internet according to 6 criteria: design, multiplatform, content, updates, availability, online and offline possibilities.

1. Design

In accordance with this criterion, the application should provide a user interface and intuitive user interaction. Design, navigation, notifications are evaluated based on this criterion.

2. Multiplatform

The application should display correctly on different types of devices. It is necessary to check: work on retina-screens of interface elements; transition from horizontal to vertical position; functionality for checking the required version of the operating system; the correct operation of media files on different devices and operating systems.

3. Content

One of the most important elements in quality assessment is content. Moreover, the attention should be paid to content verification. We should check: the correct display of all elements; text and graphic blocks; support for various languages; current information: dates, time, etc.

4.Updates

The application should not lose the stored user information after the update procedure. The update process should not require special knowledge. Correspondence of the functionalities of the new and old versions; data safety after updating must are to be checked

5. Availability

The content or sufficient quantity should be for free or cost not so much money so that everyone can afford to purchase a premium subscription.

6. Online & offline possibilities

It is the function of working online and offline as well. Sometimes it's better to immerse yourself in the atmosphere of learning by turning off all distractions like TV and the Internet. in such cases, the offline function is very useful.

Today, there is a whole range of mobile applications that can be successfully used for educational purposes. We consider some of the applications for devices based on the Android and IOS operating system as the most common and affordable among students. They are:

1.BBC learning English
2. Lyrics training

3. Ewa learn English
4. Skyeng listening
5. Voa learning English - Practice listening everyday

BBC learning English

BBC has always been distinguished by high standards, so it is not surprising that the same standards are maintained on the BBC Learning English website. The People are invited to learn English with the help of BBC-style videos and radio programs. They discuss various news and new English words, and the smallest subtleties of English pronunciation are sorted out in videos. Moreover, all podcasts and videos have listening exercises to test learners' understanding of words. To conclude, this is a great resource for practicing listening. This is probably one of the few programs that offers free content for users of all operating systems, but will be difficult for the beginner level learners.

With **LyricsTraining,** you will not only quickly learn to perceive a spoken language by ear, but also enrich your vocabulary with new words and expressions, and become better at reading and practicing grammar.

Music naturally contributes to learning and memorization. The app gives an opportunity to listen to a song, follow the lyrics, sing along and improve the pronunciation. In addition to music, there are many interesting things: excerpts from films, television shows, television shows, etc. The application can be downloaded to phones with any operating system, and there is also a website if users want to use the application in the lesson.

Ewa learn English

Before you are given the opportunity to study words and texts, the program offers to test your knowledge of English, that is, knowledge of words. We advise everyone not to refuse and pass the test. Further, when the program checks the texts in its database for the words familiar to you, categories for study will appear in the main menu. There are texts from the series, for example, the script of the series with all the words, maybe an excerpt from the text, there is a lot of content in fact. You study all this, select unfamiliar words for you and get training in order to learn these words and add yourself to the dictionary. The training implemented is worthy, you will quickly get used to it and will get enough pleasure from what is happening. The application does not give all the content for free, but it is quite cheap.

Skyeng Listening application creators made sure that everyone could find audio recordings to their taste in the filter system. You can sort entries by interests and duration directly on the main page. There you can even customize the accent of the British or American. It is up to you to make simple but useful manipulations with the recordings: you can rewind them, you can turn on subtitles for them, and you can also choose a complex or easy listening mode.

The comprehension exercises are given at the end of the audio recording. The exercises include 3 questions. Depending on the difficulty mode, you can or may not do the exercises. The only drawback of the authors is that there is no way to identify which tasks you have already completed,

VOA learning English is a special program of Voice of America to help English learners all over the world to develop their English skills everyday. This program includes stories, lessons, together with up-to-date news reports which are written by simple vocabulary and spoken at a quite slow speed to help learners to understand them easily. The contents are updated daily with transcribed audios and videos. The most popular contents include world news, education, business, science, technology, American history, culture, nature, stories, everyday grammar and vocabulary, etc. The main "trick" of this resource: Podcasts on this site are unique in their transcripts. After each audio recording, you see a text in which almost every word is clickable. After clicking on any unfamiliar word on the site, a pop-up window appears with help information from the Merriam-Webster dictionary. In the window you will see an indication of the part of the speech, the definition of a word in English, an example of its use in a sentence, and you can also listen to how it is pronounced. Thus, on this site you can not only listen to podcasts, but also learn new vocabulary in context.

Obviously, the use of mobile applications has become part of the educational process. There is an expansion of opportunities and ensuring equal access to education, as the cost of mobile devices is constantly decreasing, accordingly, an increasing number of people have the opportunity to purchase them, know how to use them, and, therefore, training in additional educational programs is becoming more affordable.

Since mobile devices, as a rule, are the property of their owners, they are at their disposal throughout the day, therefore, the efficiency and accessibility to educational, methodological, organizational and management information is very high. Using the application, you can stay up to date with the events of the educational institution, quickly receive relevant information.

Literature:

1. Message from the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan: "Kazakhstan-2050 Strategies."