THE IMPACT OF SMARTPHONES IN ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS ON KURDISH EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Hemn Mohammed Ali Mahmood1, Zanyar Nathir Ghafer2, Chro Omer Sdiq3
Asuda Faraj Muhialdeen4, Shanga Sleman Mohammed5
Department of English Language, College of Basic Education, University of Halabja, Halabja, 46018, Iraq1,3,4,5
Information Technology department, Bright Technical and Vocational Institute, Sulaymaneah, Kurdistan region, Iraq2
Email: zanyar.ghafer@btvi.edu.iq

KEYWORDS
Smartphones, writing skills, Halabja University, social media.

ABSTRACT
Smartphones have become an important Internet platform and play an essential role in individuals' daily lives, and their use is gaining popularity due to their various features. The study's main objective was to investigate the potential of smartphones as tools for improving English writing skills. The proliferation of Education has facilitated the broad adoption of mobile language learning, prompting this research to examine the growing inclination of undergraduate students to acquire English language skills via the use of Smartphones. The quantitative method was used to collect data by conducting a questionnaire to undergraduate students, and the survey included the recruitment of 52 individuals, with ages ranging from 18 to 23; among all those who took part, there were 41 females and 11 males. The results indicated that using smartphones positively impacted various aspects of English language proficiency, such as listening, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication. The findings show that the respondents acknowledged the benefits of employing social media and smartphones to enhance their writing abilities by using smartphones, and this pattern is anticipated to persist in the forthcoming period.

INTRODUCTION
The significance of social media in enhancing many areas of language acquisition, with a particular focus on writing skills, has been acknowledged in a burgeoning corpus of literature (Turner, 2020). Furthermore, extensive evidence supports the notion that the worldwide implementation of smart education has substantially impacted the whole education sector (Berge & Muilenburg, 2014). According to (Hashim et al., 2017), there is scholarly support for the use of smartphones as a means to enhance English language proficiency, specifically in the area of writing abilities. According to (Kaceli & Klíměvá, 2019), this kind of research promotes the inclination of undergraduate students to engage in formal methods of studying rather than informal methods while using smartphones. In light of this investigation, it is crucial to provide readers with more information and assistance as they use smartphones to enhance their skills and get familiar with apps that improve their abilities (Roopchund et al., 2019).
Previous research has shown that smartphones have the potential to serve as platforms for the dissemination of educational resources and facilitate communication and engagement among students, as well as between students and educators (Wong et al., 2012). Numerous scholars have studied the significance of using smartphones, namely social media, to facilitate learning (Roopchund et al., 2019). Previous scholars have extensively examined the efficacy of smartphones in facilitating learning opportunities for individuals, notably in vocabulary acquisition and spelling proficiency (Pegrum, 2014). These scholars have highlighted the convenience and accessibility that smartphones provide, allowing learners to engage in practice sessions at any given time and location. Numerous studies have shown that the influence of mobile device use on pupils may be either advantageous or detrimental, depending on factors such as cultural disparities, degree of maturity, and individual mindset (Ling, 2004). Previous studies have indicated that there remains a lack of clarity regarding teachers' perspectives on the utilization of these tools within educational settings due to insufficient research on teachers' attitudes toward incorporating this technology into language learning (Ertmer & Hruskocy, 1999).

The objective of the research on the impact of smartphones in enhancing writing skills is to investigate the specific ways smartphones can improve students' writing skills. The research should aim to explore the various features and applications of smartphones that can be used for writing and assess the impact of these tools on the quality of writing in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and organization. The research should also aim to identify the challenges and limitations of using smartphones for writing and ways to overcome these challenges. Additionally, the research should investigate the role of cultural and socio-economic factors in the effectiveness of using smartphones for writing and examine the perceptions and attitudes of students towards using smartphones for writing. Finally, the research should provide recommendations for teachers and educators on effectively using smartphones to enhance writing skills and integrate these tools into their pedagogy and assessment practices.

The Problem with the Study is that very little research has been conducted on how students can use smartphones to enhance their writing skills. So far, studies have focused a lot on the importance of smartphones in the process of learning, but they did not focus too much on writing skills for undergraduate students. This study benefits a growing area of research by investigating whether smartphones can promote writing skills among undergraduate students as one of the methods for them to learn how to write well.

The research aims to investigate how social media and the features of smartphones online can replace studying in the classroom and indicate those applications that have a positive side to enhance writing skills, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Google, and Yahoo. The research limitations may include the sample size, which may not represent all students who use smartphones for writing. The availability of data on the use of smartphones for writing and the quality and reliability of the data may also limit the research. The following questions were addressed to be covered by the research study.

a. What is the difference in writing skills between students who use smartphones for writing and those who do not?

b. What are the specific features of smartphones contributing to improving writing skills?
c. What are the challenges in using smartphones for writing, and how can they be addressed?

METHOD RESEARCH

The methodology portion of the research article describes data collection and analysis methodologies. This poll examined Kurdish EFL university students' views on using cell phones to improve writing. The survey included demographic, multiple-choice, Likert-scale, and open-ended items to collect reliable data. Google Forms conducted the survey and analyzed the results following informed permission. This section details the survey design, data gathering, and analytic methodologies.

Research design

This quantitative research examines how individuals use smartphones, especially social media, to enhance their writing. Questionnaires as the main data-gathering tool are justified since they “supply standardized answers” (Denscombe, 2009). This ensures that all respondents are asked identical questions, minimizing interpersonal effects on the data (Punch, 2013). The present research uses a quantitative technique to examine how participants use smartphones, especially social media, to enhance their writing. Using questionnaires as the main data-collecting strategy is supported by its ability to provide standardized responses (Denscombe, 2009). This ensures that all respondents are asked identical questions, minimizing interpersonal effects on the data (Punch, 2013).

Sample and population

This study was conducted among undergraduates. English students enrolled in universities located in Halabja, Sulaimany, and Garmian. 52 participants, aged 18 to 23, were recruited for the survey. Of the total participants, 11 were male, and 41 were female.

Research procedure

This study was conducted during the academic year 2023, specifically during the university term. To gather information, the researchers developed a survey consisting of 18 items to collect data on the perceptions of Kurdish EFL university students regarding using smartphones to enhance writing skills. The survey questions were piloted to ensure their comprehensiveness and validity. Data collection commenced after obtaining informed consent from participants, and participants were provided with clear instructions on completing the survey. They were also informed how the collected data would be used in the study. The survey was administered online through Google Forms, with participants taking an average of 10 to 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Responses were systematically gathered and analyzed by the researchers.
Research instrument

In this study, a questionnaire created by the researchers and distributed using Google Forms was used to gather data. There were 19 items in the questionnaire altogether, consisting of open-ended, multiple-choice, and agree/disagree questions. In particular, the questionnaire had six multiple-choice questions, and participants were asked to choose the right answer depending on their beliefs. Furthermore, there were two open-ended questions on the questionnaire that needed succinct written answers from participants. The seven questions in the agree/disagree portion of the questionnaire asked participants to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the assertions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to this data, we can infer that the number of participants is 52 (21.2%) male, and 41 (78.8%) female. A total of 52 participants ranged in age from 18 to 23. Most participants were between 21 and 23 years of age, and 37 were participants (71.2%). This study was conducted among undergraduate English students enrolled in universities located in Halabja, 28 participants (53.8); Sulaimany, 14 participants (26.9); and Garmian, 10 participants (19.2).

Likert scale questions:

in summary this results of figure shows that 19.2 strongly disagree and 32.7 disagree, 32.7 neutral , 11.5 agree 3.8 strongly agree .This finding is directly related to previous studies, which have suggested that using mobile writing skills is considered a platform to help learners get experience in writing skills, so it is a good reason for the increasing number of learners (Cahyano et al., 2019).
In response to Question 2, most surveyed indicated that %5.8 strongly disagree, %9.6 disagree, %17.3 neutral, %51.9 agree, and %15.4 strongly agree. This finding was also reported by (Godwin-Jones, 2017). Despite learning by smartphones at an extremely rapid rate because using smartphones, students improve their skills.

This figure shows that the responses to this question were: %3.8 strongly disagree, %3.8 disagree, %. 21.2 neutral, %50 agree and %21.2 strongly disagree. This outcome contradicts Several studies suggesting that excessive smartphone use can negatively impact attention span and cognitive performance. Researchers have found that heavy smartphone use is associated with decreased sustained attention, increased impulsivity, and reduced working memory capacity (Wilmer et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2018).

The majority of those who responded to this item felt that %3.8 strongly disagree, %7.7 disagree, %9.6 neutral, %55.8 agree, and %23.1 strongly agree. In accordance with the
present results, previous studies have demonstrated that smartphones can improve academic performance Ng, S. F., Hassan, N. S. I. C., Nor, N. H. M., & Malek, N. A. A. (2017).

Picture 5
Likert scale questions

This figure shows that the responses to this question were like %3.8 strongly disagree, % 1.9 disagree, % 17.3 neutral, %42.3 agree, %34.6 strongly agree. This study supports evidence from previous observations (Chiu et al., 2015) that approved smartphones are powerful for the use of practice vocabulary and spelling.

Picture 6
Likert scale questions

This figure shows that the responses to this question were like % 1.9 strongly disagree, %3.8 disagree, % 21.2 neutral, %42.3 agree, % 30.8 strongly agree. Research about using mobile phones for the learning process between students reveals that step by step it is a reason to increasing using mobile phones among students (Johnson & Radhakrishnan, 2017).

Picture 7
Likert scale questions
When the participants answered this question, the majority commented that %5.8 strongly disagreed, %17.3 disagreed, %32.7 neutral, %30.8 agreed, and %13.5 strongly agreed. This finding was also reported by Ahmed, S., Mishra, A., Akter, R., Shah, M. H., & Sadia, A. A. (2022). Both agreed that using smartphones may cause aches and pains.

Results in Table (1) for this question show that (9.6%) of participants chose this statement (students who do not use smartphones can write better than those who use smartphones), and then (34.6%) of participants chose (students who use a smartphone can write better than those who do not use a smartphone). Also (5.8%) of participants chose (there is no relationship between using a smartphone and writing ability). Eventually (61.5%) of participants chose this statement (The relationship between smartphone use and writing ability depends on the individual). Thus, most of the students believed that there is a relationship between smartphones and writing skills. This finding broadly supports the work of other studies, such as Shoukat, who said there is an extent of relationship between smartphones and writing ability (Shoukat, 2019).

in the responses presented in Table (2), most of the participants (76.9%) chose the vocabulary area because they believed that smartphones could have a good impact on improving their writing skills, and (46.2%) of participants chose the punctuation area, so (13.5%) of participants chose storytelling. Also, the least number of participants (9.6%) chose drawing. Finally (42.3%) of participants chose the grammar area. This outcome shows a
direct and contrary relationship with the previous studies. Examples of direct relationships are Cahyano and Astuti (2019) (Ho & Hong, 2019), who found that video on smartphones helps students to accrue ability and writing skills to help them develop grammar and vocabulary skills. The contrary relationship is that while students use social media, they can learn something else instead of only vocabulary and grammatical rules; this is why we say writing rules on social media is informal (Chandran et al., 2019).

These four question tables have the same theme about features of smartphones to improve writing skills; one of the main features is allowing you to write at any time and place, and 61.5% of participants chose this option. Despite (11.5%) of participants choosing to limit their writing to specific times and places, the option was an important feature according to them, and this feature was not important to participants (by distracting you from writing), which is why they voted (0%). Although (15.4%) of participants voted about requiring you to use a physical keyboard instead of touchscreen typing, this option is linked with the answers in Table 2, which are keyboard features. Another smartphone feature is auto-correction, as shown in Tables 2 and 3. Participants chose it more than other features. In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that mobile applications and futures are beneficial for improving the learning process; research about using smartphones for the learning process between students reveals that step by step, it is a reason to increasing using of mobile phones among students (Johnson & Radhakrishnan, 2017) And One of the most significant current smartphone discussions is using social media to assist writing without spending much time writing (Will et al., 2019). Recent research has shown that smartphones have been useful in learning because of their features and applications (Allagui, 2014).

CONCLUSION
In summary, this study posits that smartphones can augment diverse English language proficiencies among pupils owing to their mobility and access to the internet. Social media has been used to support students in developing their writing abilities, and the outcomes have shown favorable reception and feedback about using social media to enhance writing skills. Additionally, the research revealed that social media platforms have the potential to provide favorable outcomes by enhancing individuals' pleasure and facilitating the process of writing. Smartphones can enhance several facets of English language proficiency, including listening, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication. Additionally, the study indicates that smartphones and social media serve as an optimal platform for enhancing
English writing proficiency. The results of this research also suggest that college students have made notable advancements in their English language proficiency via smartphones in recent years, with indications that this pattern will persist in the coming years.

**Recommendations**

Based on the conclusion and discussion of the data, the following recommendations are presented:

Conduct a more extensive study with a larger sample size to validate this study's findings and obtain a more representative result. And investigate the long-term effects of smartphone use on students' English language skills. This can help determine the sustainability of the benefits of smartphone use in improving English language skills. The last one is to explore the potential of other technological devices and tools, such as tablets or language learning apps, in improving English language skills.

**Open-ended questions:**

In asking participants to write their opinion about what those applications are that help you improve your writing skills, Overall, the results indicate that (9.6%) wrote grammar applications. (3.8%) chose social media applications. Consistent with the literature, this research found that many applications are helpful for improving writing skills. For example, WhatsApp Messenger is a cross-platform app working for smartphones, and it is practical for mobile users because they can benefit from improving their writing skills (Allagui, 2014). The results of this question (Do you think that students who use smartphones for writing have better or worse writing skills than those who don’t?) suggest that the responses represent four themes:

a. Most students believe smartphones have better writing skills than those without.

b. Some participants believed it depended on whether individuals used smartphones or not.

c. A few participants believed that both were correct for using smartphones.

d. A small number of participants believed that it was worse to use a smartphone, and they rejected it for writing.

A number of studies have begun to examine how smartphones, and particularly social media, can have positive effects in terms of helping and improving writing skills (Chandran et al., 2019). So, student leaders' use of social media has both negative and positive aspects (Wil et al., 2019). Moreover, due to their values, they can benefit from them by improving their language skills, particularly their writing skills (Allagui, 2014).

**REFERENCES**


Copyright holders:

Hemn Mohammed Ali Mahmood¹, Zanyar Nathir Ghafar², Chro Omer Sdiq³
Asuda Faraj Muhialdeen⁴, Shanga Sleman Mohammed⁵ (2024)

First publication right:
JoSS - Journal of Social Science

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International