

# The Research on the Current Situation of English Mobile Learning in College under the Background of “Internet +”

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**Abstract.** Mobile learning (M-learning) is a major approach and trend in the development of education under the background of “Internet +”. Through a questionnaire survey, this paper researches on the current situation of English mobile learning in college and analyses the attitudes, demands, preferences and affecting factors in their mobile learning, based on which this paper provides some suggestions aiming at introducing more flexible teaching methods to college students to improve English learning results and to promote the reform of English learning methods.

**Keywords:** Internet +; English M-learning; college students.

## 1. Introduction

The era of “Internet +” emphasizes not only the universality and mobility of the Internet, but also the change of people’s way of working, living and learning due to it. In the background of “Internet +”, the English teaching in colleges also encounters opportunity as well as challenge. The pluralistic mixture teaching mode and multi-interactive learning environment based on Internet and modern information technology is the trend of foreign language teaching reform in colleges.

M-learning, short for mobile learning, is a process of knowledge construction by gaining educational information, resources and services via wireless communication network and mobile devices. The aim of M-learning is to break the limitation of tradition learning, to satisfy the needs of fragmental learning, and to make learning to develop toward personalized learning and self-learning without limitation of time and space. Especially in recent years, the popularity of smart phones and development of wireless network provide more favorable conditions for M-learning. This article investigates the current situation of English M-learning in college, hoping to provide basis for its development strategy.

## 2. The Design of the Survey

Based on the theories of mobile learning and second language acquisition, the author compiled the questionnaire combining with the characteristics of students’ mobile learning. The mainly focus on the students’ use of mobile devices, the situation of M-learning, the students’ demands for M-learning, the students’ preferences for M-learning and main obstacles to M-learning. The study chose 792 students from the Tianhe College of Guangdong Polytechnic Normal University at random to make the questionnaire. They were from about 15 specialties respectively, which shows the universality of the questionnaire.

## 3. The Analysis of the Survey Results

### 3.1 The Uses of Mobile Devices and the Situation of M-learning

Survey data show that among all the students’ mobile devices, smartphones are the most popular, which make up 96.7%. Laptops are the second highest, which is 74%. Besides these two main kinds of mobile devices for learning, the students also have MP3/MP4/Mp5 players, electronic dictionaries. It can be seen that mobile devices have gained high popularity among college students. The data also show that 58.3% of the respondents spend more than 5 hours a day online, which shows that today, a large number of college students are smartphone addicts. They spend time on

line, studying, chatting, shopping, browsing the web, etc. Although 82.5% of the students say they spend most of the time on line studying, only 28.9% of them say that they understand M-learning, which reflects that there are quite a number of students who have participated in M-learning without their awareness of it. 65.4% of the respondents say that they only occasionally study English with the help of mobile devices, which shows that they haven't treated M-learning as a way of study. As a result, M-learning is random for them, lacking plans and aims. And 12.8% of them say they have never studied via mobile devices, which means that mobile devices have not been used as a kind of learning platform.

### **3.2 The Students' Attitudes and Demands for English M-learning**

English is a practical subject. How to use advanced technology of multimedia to assist teaching to make English teaching activity flexible, convenient, intuitive and effective has always been a hot research topic of the study of English teaching. M-learning, as a new type of learning, can create an immersive language environment with the help of multimedia, which is easily accepted by many college students. In the questionnaire, 85.5% of the respondents agree that in the background of "internet +", they really need English M-learning and there are 93.2% of students indicate their willingness to do M-learning, which show that most students are willing to try this new type of learning. Besides, there are 77.2% of them acknowledge that M-learning can help to improve their English level. As for the question on the purpose of English M-learning, to improve English skills, to pass all kinds of English tests and to finish teachers' assignments are the first three choices of the respondents with the percentage of 82.5%, 80.7% and 63.3% respectively. 88.3% of the respondents hope that English M-learning can help to improve their listening comprehension. 88.1% of them hope their vocabulary can be enlarged through M-learning. And another 79.7% of them hope to improve their oral English. It can be seen that most students still lay emphasis on basic English language skills not on language knowledge.

### **3.3 The Students' Preference for English M-learning**

#### **3.3.1 The Preference for the Ways of Learning**

In the survey, among all kinds of devices for M-learning, smart phones are the most popular among the respondents with a percentage of 94.2%, which shows the advantages of smart phones. With the development of technology, smart phones' portability and mobility are higher than other M-learning devices and its increasingly comprehensive and rich functions create favorable condition for M-learning. When it comes to their favorite ways of English M-learning, 59.1% of the students prefer to download English study APPs. It reflects that as the product of the rapid development of information and communication technology, APPs are convenient, resource-rich, flexible, with high expandability, permeability and is a good way of learning English for Chinese students who are lack of language environment.

#### **3.3.2 The Preference for the Resources of Learning**

When the students are asked which English M-learning resources they often use, 73.1% of them choose the APPs of memorizing words. On one hand, it can be seen from the data that students put high value on their vocabulary; on the other hand, it shows that they have a relatively low level and poor mastery of vocabulary. And there are 68.7% students choose the APPs of listening and speaking. They want to train their listening ability, correct their pronunciation, imitate the standard expression to improve their oral English, which is consistent with their expectation of English M-learning. The data also indicated that the choice of learning resource are very limited and smart phones are just a way of assisting learning, not a platform of learning.

#### **3.3.3 The Preference for the Time of Learning**

As for the question "When will you usually choose to learning English through mobile devices", 60.4% of the respondents prefer a regular time, such as the time for self-study or the time before go to bed. 33.8% of them to use their fragmented time. As for the question of the ideal duration of

M-learning, 48.2% chose 30 minutes or above, and 46.2% chose 10-20 minutes. Only 5.6% chose within 10 minutes. It shows that M-learning has been more and more accepted by college students. Many students prefer to treat M-learning as a formal way and want to do it regularly just as they take other courses. It also embodies that M-learning is flexible and can be carried out anytime and anywhere.

### **3.4 The Factors Affecting English M-learning**

M-learning make full use of the mobile devices such as smart phones and campus networks to give students a new way of learning. The poor quality of mobile devices and network will lead to poor transmission quality of video and audio data, which will affect the final results of learning. 66.5% of the respondents in the survey say that the condition of network is the most important factor affecting English M-learning. On campus, the WIFI connection is limited by space while accessing to the Internet through 4G/5G network will produce network traffic costs, which will all have negative effects on students' M-learning.

Moreover, the students' poor self-control is another factor. The most commonly used functions of mobile devices are communication and entertainment. When using the devices, students are easily to be disturbed by all kinds of messages or reminders and cannot concentrate on their learning. In addition, the flexibility of M-learning makes it difficult for students to concentrate on learning for a long time, which will also affect the learning efficiency. 68.% of the respondents admit that they lack good self-control so that they can not ensure the study time. They are willing to study through mobile devices, but too often they lack planning and strategies, which results in the interferences of learning.

The third factor is about the learning materials. The data shows that 47.5% of the respondents think the English M-learning materials are not attractive enough. Most free English learning APPs are very similar, concentrating on the basic language skills, not on the language knowledge. Although there are abundant network resources, the targeted learning resources is still little and lack individuality. Students' ability to search for useful learning materials is relatively insufficient and they are blind in selecting learning materials. All these would affect the results of English M-learning.

## **4. The Countermeasures**

### **4.1 To Optimize M-learning Network**

Every step in M-learning depend depends on network. At the present, the wireless network has become an important part of campus life, which is also the main channel for teachers and students to get information. The bandwidth of mobile network and the costs the learners have pay is directly related to the acceptance of M-learning. And the data transmit rate restrict the development of teaching resources and quality of learning. In order to provide convenience for M-learning, to achieve the purpose of learning anywhere with any mobile device, it is necessary to optimize the M-learning network. There ought to be a campus wireless network which can cover the whole school. At the same time, the network should be of high availability, high reliability, high security, high redundancy, extensibility and manageability, which can satisfy the needs of M-learning.

### **4.2 To Strengthen Teachers' Guidance of M-learning**

In order to solve the students' problem of lacking self-control in M-learning, teachers should strengthen their guidance in strategy of English M-learning. The training and applying of strategy will help to increase the students' learning efficiency. In classroom teaching, teacher should introduce the strategies of M-learning management and self-study, cultivate students' awareness of M-learning. For the students who find persistent learning difficult due to poor self-control, teachers should focus on the cultivation of metacognitive strategy; for the students who do not know how to choose appropriate learning materials, teachers may recommend some M-learning recourses as

supplementary information outside class. And teachers should supervise students to complete M-learning tasks and the students' performance should be included in course assessment.

#### **4.3 To Encourage Students' Collaborative English M-learning**

Teachers should encourage students to actively participated in English M-learning and conduct collaborative English M-learning. In the process of M-learning, teachers can introduce the competitive mechanism to stimulate students' initiative and arouse their interests of learning. For example, teachers can regularly arrange class presentation or group competition which are centered on the contents in M-learning. And ask the students to vote the best students in vocabulary, speech, writing, etc. according to their performance every month or every semester. M-learning, a new kind of learning mode, should be used not only in class but also after class, to achieve the purpose of M-learning in students' competition and to motivate students as much as possible.

#### **4.4 To Build English M-learning Platform**

M-learning enable students to get a huge amount of resources by connecting to the Internet and with the development of mobile phone application, there are many good APPs to satisfy the different needs of students. The large number of information make it difficult for students to find resources which are suitable for them. On the other hand, the materials may not be closely related to what they learn in class, which makes it difficult to be a supplementary for classroom teaching. Therefore, to build platforms suitable for students in different schools is very important in the popularization of English M-learning. For example, teachers can use WeChat subscription to build M-learning platform to issue more targeted learning resources and information. They also can build QQ group or WeChat group to realize the purpose of Realtime communication in order create a more real and cordial environment for M-learning.

### **5. Conclusion**

M-learning is the trend of human social development as well as the inevitable product of learning diversity and individuality. With the rapid development of wireless communication technology, mobile internet technology and mobile intelligent terminal, the combination of "mobile" and "education" will become the mainstream of education in the future. And with the continuous development and improvement of learning APPs, with teachers' increasing knowledge of M-learning and with the learners' improved awareness of correct using mobile devices, M-learning will be the important and effective way to assist English learning and teaching.

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