

# **The Impact of Mobile Assisted Language Learning on Developing Kurdish EFL Students' Speaking Sub-skills at Koya University**

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## **Abstract**

Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) devices are regarded as teaching instruments for their small size, smartness, portability, and comfortable use. For years, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) researchers in education have been reporting that formal learning is getting boring and is resulting in dropping out. Mobile technology and application could be a crucial and unique approach to bridge the gap between formal and informal learning. This paper aims at finding out the effect of using mobile assisted language learning devices such as **smartphones** on improving EFL Kurdish university students' speaking sub-skills such as fluency, accuracy, communication strategies, speech acts and discourse markers. The research experimental design is pretest-experiment-post-test. Second year students in English Department at Koya University were selected as the sample. Both controlled and experimental groups were taught the same material, though, using different methods. The results revealed that there is a significant development in students' speaking sub skills after using MALL ( $t(9.411) = -3.10; p < 0.05$ ). The experimental group post-test mean score (Mean = 14.10) was higher than the control group post-test mean score (Mean = 9.54). It is concluded that the experimental group outperformed the control group.

**Key words:** Impact, *MALL*, *EFL Kurdish students*, *Speaking Sub-skill*

## 1. Introduction

A limited number of studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of mobile learning devices and applications as language learning tools and learning resources on improving students' speaking skills. Few researchers considered how to use mobile devices to support pedagogical approach that is not teacher-led. Also, few researchers considered how to use mobile devices to support developing academic speaking sub-skills. In the light of the lack of research in this field in terms of the Iraqi Kurdistan universities, this topic has been chosen though there were attempts to integrate computer technology into instruction, few were in mobile technology. The interest in research related to speaking skills remains relatively low. The main aim of this study is to investigate the impact of mobile learning tools upon improving EFL students' speaking sub-skills such as fluency, accuracy, communication strategies, speech acts and discourse markers.

## 2. Literature Review

Despite having little published MALL research in speaking, so far, it is suggested that collaborative speaking tasks could be assisted by mobile devices (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). Developing speaking skills have been investigated through smart mobile phones (Viberg and Grönlund, 2012 & Kurtz, 2012). Bellarmen (2014) asserts that most sophisticated mobile phones are used as effective platform for teaching and learning processes and effective medium for practicing speaking in classrooms. Prior studies have been carried out to investigate the impacts of mobile devices on language skills. For example, Ogunduyile's (2013, p.1149) study with a teacher and twelve students investigated the integration of mobile learning into language instruction in the Federal University of Technology, secondary school 2, Akure. It revealed the importance and flexibility of teaching and learning with mobile phones. Several scholars introduced and reviewed the use of mobile technology and its applications for language education. For example, the study findings by Muhammed (2014) on EFL Sulaimani University students in which the effectiveness of mobiles on language learning was investigated indicated almost all the participants saw the essential use of smartphones in the process of English language learning. Moreover,

Sevari, (2012, p.20) claims that the utilization of the mobile-device-supported by peer-assisted learning could reduce EFL learners' anxiety and promote their motivation and confidence.

The impact of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) as MALL devices on learners' speaking competences was investigated by Hwang, et al. (2014) who conducted a study with a class of thirty-three fifth graders to investigate their potential use as means of delivering designed learning activities to identify impacts upon participants' English speaking skills. The results indicated that the students' perception was positive towards learning activities through these tools. It is also found that students' speaking skills had different correlations. Additionally, the study conducted by Al-Qudaimi (2013) at Urmia University in Iran showed that 44% of mobile owners browse the Internet, access the Internet and voice-messaging. Thornton and Houser (2005) presented the results of three studies in mobile phone whose participants were Japanese university students. They examined the participants in respect to exchanging emails in the mobile phones, SMS English vocabulary in the mobile phones at times interval, and using video capable mobile phones for explaining English Idioms. The results demonstrated that 100% of the participants own a mobile phone on the one hand, and on the other hand, the students who receive lessons in mobile phones perform twice better than those receive lessons on paper or web. Students felt that using mobile in classroom learning is an effective technological and educational device.

## **2.1 MALL Devices**

Mobile learning is a developed form of e-learning, which joins mobile computing and e-learning. With this novice technology, learning will become more student-centered and informal, than being teacher-centered and formal (Oye, et al. 2012). Some researchers believe that mobile learning is "a shift from teacher-led learning to student-led one." However, mobile learning is sometimes seen as a teacher driving learning than student driving one (Miangah & Nearat, 2012, p.310).

MALL enhances learning through the use of mobile phones, PDAs, tablet PCs, smartphones, laptop computers, MP3/ MP4 players, handheld computers and personal media players (Kukulaska-Hulme, 2005; Samuels, 2003; Traxler, 2007; Al-Qudaimi, 2013 & Kukulaska-Hulme & Shield, 2008). Being properly used, learning has

been easily developed with the assistance of some device features. Types of handheld devices share characteristics in size, form or function (Trinder, Magill, and Roy, 2005). Categories of handheld devices can be classified into simple purpose such as audio players and multipurpose devices that join a PDA or phone to other functionalities like cameras and MP3 players.

## **2.2 MALL Applications**

Among MALL applications are mobile-phones, personal digital assistants, and portable digital audio players whose effective use requires the thoughtful application of second language pedagogy (Chinnery, 2006). According to Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2007) and Al-Qudaimi (2013), MALL uses technologies and communication mediums such as mobile phones, digital cell phones, MP3/MP4 players, PDAs, IPOD, smartphones and handheld computers.

Mobile devices are tiny in size and self-supporting enough to use in ordinary matters of life and at the same time, can be utilized for some sort of learning (Mehta, 2012). The handset devices such as mobile phones which were only used for chatting, organizing and diaries are no longer used for these aims but now they have become pocket-sized computers which provide access to online systems, and services that can enhance learning. However, network and signal are still barriers in areas like traveling (Attewell, 2005).

## **2.3 Mobile phones**

A report by International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2011) shows that among various types of mobile learning devices, mobile phones are the most widely owned and used with almost six billion subscribers worldwide. According to World Bank (2012) report, 75% of the world population has access to mobile phones. However the ratio of world's population with mobile phone signals has been 61% in 2003 and 90% in 2010, the rapid growth of mobile phones does not match with the history of technology.

The popularity of mobile phones use is due to some reasons. Traxler, (2005) states that as a palmtop device, the popularity of mobile phone ownership among all the other technological devices is due to mobility features and functions. The preliminary phones were equipped with simple features like Personal Information Manager (PIM)

tools, such as address books and calendar; more advanced phones have built-in cameras and infrared or Bluetooth connectivity for instant information exchange (Trinder, Magill, and Roy, 2005). Then, they were used for sending and receiving SMS, SMS text messaging, making calls and oral communication that enhance interaction among students (Saran, Cagilty and Seferoglu, 2009, Caudill, 2007 & Bellarmen, 2014). In addition to these, more advanced cellular phones have function like Multimedia Message Services (MMS) which let students to see the definition of vocabulary items, visual pictures, and pronunciation. For example, Saran, Cagilty and Seferoglu, (2009) study indicated that using SMS and MMS functions develop vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, cellular phone users can make good use of the build-in cameras for taking photos and recording videos for themselves (Bellarmen, 2014, p.10).

Rapid developments in mobile technology and widespread ownership of mobile devices seem to have an impact on language education, as well as other learning contexts. Amongst benefits of mobile technologies are their availability, portability, outside classroom usability, in any place or any time and social inclusion in language learning. Despite these benefits MALL has related demerits, such as their screen sizes, limited audiovisual quality, virtual keyboarding and one-finger data entry and limited power (Chinnery, 2006, p.10).

## **2.4 Smartphones**

Lenhart (2012) defines “smartphone” as a handheld device that integrates mobile phone capabilities with the more common features of a handheld computer or PDA. According to a survey findings conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) in 2012 (Fox & Duggan, 2012), 53% of all US adults own a smartphone, which indicates that the usage of smartphone has been skyrocketing for the last few years. The current multifunctional mobile technology enables users to access the Internet ubiquitously for locating and searching information, emailing, reading e-books, and even shopping. The mobility has also enabled independent learning of location and time even out of classroom.

## **2.5 Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs)**

Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), undoubtedly, is the first device that touches our mind when discussing mobile hardware (Caudill, 2007). PDAs have almost all the features of “full-size laptop computer” but with the difference of fitting into a pocket (Trinder, Magill, and Roy, 2005, p. 8) and is a perfect device for the m-Learning setting (Caudill, 2007, p.6 and Trinder, Magill, and Roy, 2005) because it starts up immediately, saves time to check e-mail or respond to a message.

Many researchers have raised the problem of usability with PDA hardware (Kukulka-Hulme, 2005; Kukulka-Hulme, 2007 & Sharples, et al. 2005). Researchers, such as, (Kukulka-Hulme, 2007 & Sharples, et al., 2005) clearly state that usability is an issue with PDA than mobile phone users. Kukulka-Hulme (2007) asserts that the issue of usability is due to mobile content delivery on devices that were not originally designed to serve educational purposes. Designing mobile devices is for specific uses that allow their users to enter and access structured data like contacts, lists, dates,... exchanging messages, viewing pictures and documents, or to access the Internet, to display documents, write notes, search words, play games, record voice, listen to audio files, view pictures, video clips, take photos, and quick seek for and record information (Sharples, et al. 2005, cited in Trinder, Magill, and Roy, 2005). Positive factors for their usability are due to having colored-screen, touch screen sensitive, and speech recognition features to convert speech to text and text to speech.

Rekkedal and Dye (2007) argue both for and against the idea of PDAs' usability. They report that sending emails via PDAs and reading multimedia are hard compared to mobile phones on the one hand, and on the other, PDAs have high quality when small video clips, pictures and audio files displayed and the text can be fitted to their screen. While Kukulka-Hulme (2007) believes that usability is a user-oriented problem, Sharples, et al. (2005) think that usability has to do more with the devices themselves, for example, battery life and processing power is one of the disadvantages of PDAs compared to laptop or PC. Sharples, et al., further, state that context usability with mobile technologies indicates the problem. It can be easy to access the contact list, but challenging to read and study a long text. It can be easy to send a simple message, but difficult to utilize the very same device to talk to a

tutor. Despite these issues, they have advantages such as the potential to play podcasts (Caudill, 2007).

## **2.6 Characteristics of Mobile Learning**

The main features of mobile learning are its potential for the process of learning to be personalized, spontaneous, informal and universal (Miangah & Nearat, 2012, p.309). Other characteristics could be authenticity and accessibility that evoke students' interest to learn unconsciously (Bellarmen, 2014). Learning through mobile phones is distinguished by learners' longitude learning and greater sense of freedom of time and place. So, mobile learning overcomes the language learning boundaries in terms of time and place. It suits people who work and are busy all the time.

Miangah and Nearat (2012) summarize these characteristics as learning every time, everywhere, inside or outside the classroom, delivering various learning materials or content to students to create, upload, download and share academic resources through their smart phones and taking advantage of free time to learn whenever and wherever they want without the teacher's guidance.

Furthermore, some other features of mobile learning are "spontaneity, portability, personal, situation, unobtrusiveness, universal, 'anytime and anywhere' learning" (Kukulka-Hulme & Traxler, 2011, p.42); and informal, private, bite-sized, light-weight, context ware and connected (Traxler, 2005 cited in Rikala, 2013, p.6).

## **2.7 Speaking Skill**

Speaking is the ability of knowing a language (Nazara, 2011). It involves three areas (Burnkart, 1998). Firstly, the mechanical elements of language (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary), that allow the speaker to use the right words in the correct sequence and suitable pronunciation. Secondly, the speaking functions (transaction and interaction), that enables the speaker when the message clarity is needed and when a deep understanding is necessary. Thirdly, the sociocultural norms (such as turn-taking, rate of speech, and length of pauses between speakers) that assist an interlocutor to know the conversation situation, who is the person he is talking to and what the goal of speaking is. Recognizing these constituents, a person will know when to take a turn to speak and when to listen, how quickly he should speak, and how long he should pause. According to Worth (2004, p.3), people often

spend their communication time in this manner: Writing: 9%, reading: 16%, talking: 30%, and listening: 45% respectively. Research has indicated that teachers do nearly 50 to 80 percent of the talking in classrooms; it means that they take up almost all the time the students could be talking (Nunan, 2003, p.55). In speaking as an interactive activity, listeners often seek for clarification of what speakers say. Competent English speaking requires comprehending all the sub-skills (Field, 1997).

## **2.8 Sub-skill Approach to Speaking**

Teachers adopt the sub-skill approach as they feel “secure”. In the first place, they know what to teach in each class and the students will know what to learn (Pan, 2009, p.112). Lackman (2010, p.2) thinks that teaching certain speaking sub-skills is better than only let students ‘speak’ in the classroom.

The complexity of learning to speak in another language is reflected in the range and type of sub-skills that are entailed in L2 oral production (Hinkel, 2006, p.114). Many scholars in various studies have presented sub-skills for the four basic language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing) to make the teaching and learning approaches easier (Iyer, 2015; Richards, 1983). Roger (2008, p.6) states that “a solid grasp of all the sub-skills is necessary for full English speaking competency.” To serve the purpose of this paper, academic speaking sub-skills have been pre-tested, taught, post-tested, and assessed with the assistance of MALL devices and a designed rubric. The speaking sub-skills are explained below showing how they were taught to the experimental group with the use of MALL.

### **2.8.1 Fluency**

Fluency is defined in two ways. The first way is on the narrowest domain which merely includes a few features such as pausing, hesitations, and speech rate, while the second one is on the broadest domain which is virtually synonymous with ‘speaking proficiency’ (Luoma, 2009, p.88). For many language learners, fluency is the ability to converse with others, more than the ability to read, write, or understand oral language (Nazara, 2011, p.29). According to Lackman (2010, p.3), learners are practicing speaking with a logical flow without planning or rehearsing.

Fluency activity needs learners to focus on meaning rather than accuracy. Lack of fluency is due to students’ lack of vocabulary or grammar to deliver what they want



(Lackman, 2010, p.4). Richards (2006, p.13) defines fluency as “natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interaction, maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence”. Developing fluency depends on designing classroom activities where students negotiate meaning, use communicative strategies, correct misunderstandings and avoid communicative breakdowns. Fluency is “the extent to which speakers use the language quickly and confidently, with few hesitations or unnatural pauses, false starts, word searches, etc.” (Nunan, 2003, p.55)

To Ferris and Tagg (1996, p.331), fluency is the ability to speak the language with relative ease while focused on getting one’s meaning across: fluency includes the ability to produce connected, continuous streams of speech without causing communication breakdowns. Students have to be given the chance to develop their fluency. However, they cannot improve fluency if the teacher is continuously interrupting them to correct their oral errors. Teachers must know that making mistakes is natural in learning a new language (Nunan, 2003, p.55). A fluent speaker is able to formulate utterances quickly, but whose sentences are inaccurate and inappropriate [and thus] incomprehensible (Roger, 2008. p.11).

Academic speaking tasks such as formal presentation and participation in large–or small-group class discussion cause learner hesitation that stems from insecurity about linguistic competency (Ferris & Tagg, 1996, p.300). For Skehan and Foster (1999, cited in Gaillard, 2013, p.12), fluency is perceived as the ability to utilize language in real environment and to emphasis meaning. In contrast to accuracy, fluency is often associated with ‘phonological phenomena.’ Pausing, delivery rate, and repair which are the sub-skills of fluency discussed below.

### **2.8.1.1 Pauses**

Pauses make a crucial component of human speech that comprises between 30% and 50% of speaking time in natural speech. Pauses are categorized into two main types: Silent and filled pauses. The silent pauses are long period silence during conversations. The filled pauses include items like *uh, hmm, ah, oh, well, say, sort of, just, kind of, I mean, I think, I guess* which resemble seeking for a word, finding a word, or a word close to it (Richards, 1983, p.225).

### **2.8.1.2 Repair**

Repair is to practice for overcoming the problems in speaking. When the source of the problem is identified, the initiation of the repair can be by either the speaker “self-initiated repair” or by the hearer “other-initiated repair” (Schegloff, 1997, p.503).

To teach all these fluency sub-skills, the researchers created realistic scenarios and situations in the class. A successful way to do this is through role play and drama activities.

### **2.8.2 Teaching Fluency**

Mobile assisted language learning devices (smartphone) tasks were a pure substitution for the paper-based task in the students’ course book. The instruction has undergone through three phases. In the pre-teaching stage, the researchers asked their students to take out their smart mobile phones, to connect the Internet, plug in headsets and access the Koya University course module website code (com 8710) on which all the course materials, contents and weekly based lessons were uploaded to view or download the files one after the other. The researchers explained the content with given examples orally while the students followed the lectures power point presentations on their smart mobile phones. The researchers let the students to open the content files and think what the topic of the lecture would be. They could be pictures, diagrams, caricatures or cartoons that activate students’ pre-existing knowledge. In while-teaching stage, the researchers explained some unknown words related to the topic that makes the learners be on the right track. Moreover, they explained the importance of speaking without any hesitation. Frequent stopping, long pauses, speaking at an inappropriate rate and inability to repair show that students are influent. The students practiced all these sub-skill components of speaking inside the classroom in their conversations. They are asked to record their short speeches, dialogues, monologues, debates or discussions on their mobile phones and re-play some inside the class to be evaluated. In post-teaching phase, the researchers assigned some assignments on the course module, viber or messenger groups to be done outside the class and share their recorded speeches with all in which they used pause fillers, short pauses, appropriate length and repair. Finally, they are required to do quizzes on the topics and fill out the self-assessment form to assess their learning.

### **2.8.3 Accuracy**

Accuracy for Skehan and Foster (1999, p.96) is the ability to avoid errors in performance, to control the language and to avoid challenging structures that might provoke error. To be understood, students need to be capable of using and pronouncing words and structures in a correct manner. In order to develop accuracy, controlled practice activities are the most common way of working on spoken accuracy (Lackman, 2010, p.3). Accuracy to Roger (2008, p.11) is a significant goal of a speaking skill course. It is the extent to which students' speech matches [with] what people actually say when they use the target language (Bailey, 2003, p.55). Also, it is the ability to produce grammatically and phonologically well-formed words, phrases, and sentences (Ferris & Tagg, 1996, p.339). Contrary to fluency practice, accuracy practice focuses on creating correct examples of language use (Richards, 2006, p.13). These are the sub-skills of accuracy: Range of grammar and words and pronunciation.

#### **2.8.3.1 Range of grammar and words**

To assess students' speaking skill, the criterion used is the use of a series of correct and accurate grammar structures to create language or make sentences in oral performance. The use of a number of accurate and right words in certain settings is another popular criterion for accuracy (Knight, 1992 cited in Ulker, 2017, p.138). Students need to know a range of words, grammar and have the ability to choose from them the most appropriate ones to talk about a specific topic. The students are taught and made aware of words and structures appropriate for certain tasks or contexts and they are required to use them appropriately.

#### **2.8.3.2 Pronunciation**

Achieving native-like pronunciation is the matter of great attention. This attention takes the form of drills such as minimal pairs. For instance, "ship-sheep", "hit-heat" and "pin-bin", etc. (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005, p.155). Minimal pairs are words that differ in only one sound (Nunan, 2005; & Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005). To teach pronunciation, these five main steps should be involved. First, identifying the areas in which the students have difficulty of being understood. Teachers will be

listening for problems with vowels, consonants, stress, and intonation (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005). Accuracy in pronunciation involves discrete sounds, stress, intonation, elision and assimilation (Ulker, 2017). During normal pace speaking, there could be some changes to separate sounds to make connected speech. For example, the use of weak forms of words such as: *was* becomes /wə z/, the use of elision (not pronouncing some sounds like, the d in handkerchief), the use of contraction (to replace missing letters by apostrophe such as I am becomes I'm) and the use of assimilation (changing a sound to another such as, good morning becomes *gubmorning*) (Gower, Phillips & Walters, 2005). To teach pronunciation, the researchers focused on many pronunciation problems the students encounter after being diagnosed in pre-test in speaking. For example, pronouncing silent k, b, (-ed), minimal pairs, past forms of some verbs, etc.

#### **2.8.4 Teaching Accuracy**

In order to teach these sub-skills, the researchers followed the same procedures of fluency. To begin with the range of words, in pre teaching stage, the students were asked to view or download a word file and guess the meaning of unknown words that helped them to understand the topic of the lecture. In addition, they were asked to watch a video about the uses of the tense. In while-teaching stage, the researchers asked the students to give their answers about the meaning of words, taught the tenses and grammar topics fully and the students followed the explanations on their smart mobile phones. The grammatical topics such as 'present perfect, subject-verb concord, -ing/-ed adjectives, etc.' are explained with examples. Then the lecturers asked them to access the power point presentation and have it explained. They make pairs or small groups to start speaking about the topic and try to use the explained words and grammar points in their conversations. After recording their speeches they shared some of them in class and identified the best users of the words and grammar structures. Assessment is indispensable part of the instruction process both inside and outside class. Finally, in post-teaching stage the researchers gave them some extra practice to be done to show their performance in mastering them. Self-assessment form was made via Google form and sent to students to assess the extent to which they comprehended and used the new words and grammar topics in their speaking.

### 2.8.5 Communication Strategies

Communication strategies as a speaking sub-skill involve many other components such as turn-taking and turn-giving which are the most important ones in conversation. The other common speaking sub-skills are some way of expressing surprise, happiness, sadness, eagerness, interest in others' speeches and respond to good and bad news (Lackman, 2010). Taking turns involve knowing how and when to interject or interrupt a speaker politely. It helps students practice listening for suitable moments to take their turns without bothering the speaker. Students can practice pausing techniques to take a turn. They can also practice hesitation devices like 'ums' and 'errs' to continue on a turn that allows them think what to say next. A simple turn-taking skill allows students to pass turns to their partners by adding a question to whatever they say. Another way to teach turn-taking skill is 'escalating topics' which is an interesting activity where students practice the use of hesitation devices to hold their turns. Some examples of hesitation devices are: *err, um, mm, let me see, I mean*, etc. (Lackman, 2010). Waiting to interject is another method to hold turns. Listeners use speakers' pauses as a remark to interject. To apply this activity, a student in each group will start a conversation and the others wait to interject. The other activity to interject a turn is 'interrupting' which is similar to waiting to interject but, in this activity, the student who is speaking is interrupted by the student waiting to speak. What makes this activity different from the previous one is that the speaker will not invite the speaker to intervene. While in the previous one, the speaker invites an interjection by pausing. Some common ways to interject are: "Excuse me for interrupting, but ..., can I say something here?" (Lackman, 2010, p.12). Despite having good language ability, a rich wealth of vocabulary, extensive ability to converse, and pragmatic knowledge; speakers are still unable to judge the right moment to begin speaking (Hughes, 2006, p.216).

Students need to understand the crucial role turn-behavior plays and the solid, popular signals they might look out for and use (Hughes, 2006, p.217). Turn taking will provide learners with essential knowledge of suitable time to talk and how long to talk (Roger, 2008, p.8). Not only syntax but also the importance of prosody is undeniable in assisting a speaker whether they wish to take the turn or regret. For example, speakers' pause in the middle of a sentence and their intonation shows

either they are pausing to think of a word [what to say next], or unintentional stopping (Hughes, 2006, p.221). To teach this sub-skill, the researchers created realistic scenario in the class through debates. The controversial issues or double-sided topics such as the ban of smoking at public places were the scenario to practice turn-taking and turn-giving in which a student agrees with the topic and another disagrees. The ones who use right turn taking expressions were rewarded.

### **2.8.6 Speech Acts**

Speech acts are function entities with much concern to what is done with language rather than with what is said. When a particular bit of speech is a request, instruction or exemplification, the concentration is on what that piece of language is doing, or how the listener is supposed to react (Austin, 1962, & Searle, 1969, cited in McCarthy, 1991, p.9). Each of these bits of language performs a particular act (McCarthy, 1991). According to Cohen (2004, p.302) "A speech act is an utterance which serves as a functional unit in communication." Students utilize certain phrases for purposes like giving advice, apologizing, etc. Role plays and simulations are typical activities to teach and practice speech acts. Students need to be given a role play to be done in class to accomplish the outcome. For instance, the role play might involve a visitor to a city asking for directions and the outcome would be that they get directions to a specific location (Lackman, 2010, pp.3-7). How to give opinion, refuse ideas, give advice, ask for favor, apology, ask for clarification, information and make suggestions are some components of speech acts sub-skill. Some of them are explained below.

Giving opinion has benefits for students to participate in discussions and debates. Some common expressions for giving an opinion are: in my opinion, if you ask me, it seems to me, to my mind, quite frankly and to tell (you) the truth (Thornbury, 2006).

An essential part of responding to someone's opinion is the use of agreeing and disagreeing. Choosing appropriate ways to agree and disagree relies on the context and the person is being talked to. To show agreement and disagreement politely, a numerous phrases and structures are used such as "I'm not totally convinced about that, I think you've got a point, I don't think I agree with you, etc." (Mann and Taylore-Knowles, 2014, p.26)

One way of apologizing is saying *sorry*. Other forms include *I'm sorry*, *I'm very/terribly/awfully sorry*, and *I'm so sorry*. Another way of apologizing is when giving unwelcome news such as refusing a request or invitation is by using this expression. *I'm afraid I can't*. *I'm busy*. It often accompanies an excuse (Thornbury, 2006).

Asking for clarification is when someone does not understand something fully or need more information. For instance, 'Could you explain that more fully?' or 'Could you give me an example?' (Cole, et al. 2007, p.144).

To teach these sub-skill components of speech acts, the students were taught all the words, phrases and expressions that could be used in conversation and debates to give their opinion, showing their agreement and disagreement, ask for apology, ask for clarification, information, etc. in three stages through smart mobile devices. The researchers let the students speak about various topics using all speech acts.

### **2.8.7 Discourse Markers**

The main aim of using discourse markers is to tell the listener the way the talk is organized. Signpost language is utilizing specific words and phrases that clue the listener into what is about to occur in a speech (Nelson, 2015). The researchers introduced discourse markers and allowed students to practice them with a very easy task. First of all, the researchers made pairs and gave each pair a basic everyday task. Then, they taught them a list of discourse markers used for sequencing events such as: *To begin*, *first*, *next*, *after that*, *finally*, etc. The students have to think of step-by-step task instructions; for example, 'making a cup of coffee'. It helps each pair think of their own task but the researchers asked them to do the task at least in five steps. A good way to have students use specific discourse markers, in particular those for adding information and contrasting with what has just been said, is debates and group discussions. Prior to the discussion or debate, teachers teach some discourse markers for adding and contrasting information. The teachers get students to brainstorm the debating topic which could be a controversial issue. While debating, the teachers give scores to the students who use the cohesive ties taught in their discussions (Lackman, 2010, p.20). For teaching different types of discourse markers, the researchers have taught almost all and allowed the students to practice them inside the classroom in pair or group debates and discussions. For instance,

they asked students to tell their stories on how they spend their weekends, vacations or leisure times inside the class and record their voices via their mobile devices' voice memos application and replay them.

### **3. Methodology**

For the purpose of this paper, 57 second year non-native English sophomores were selected as the sample; (31) as the experimental group and the other (26) as the control group. The sample had reached an intermediate level (68%) in terms of English proficiency at the English Department, School of Education/ Faculty of Education at Koya University. The research question of this study is 'what is the impact of mobile assisted language learning on developing speaking sub-skills?'

The study uses pre and post-treatment tests in speaking sub-skills. In speaking pre- and posttests, the researchers prepared the speaking test questions which started from easy questions to controversial and argumentative ones to have students debated on. In addition to the researchers, two more assessors helped to administer the speaking test to both groups in which the students argued about and debated on the same chosen topic. The main purpose of asking for help from two more assessors was to be objective in assessing students as much as possible. They played the role of moderators and assessors with the aid of a rubric (see Appendix B for the rubric). The debates were recorded to re-assess the students' performance in using the speaking sub-skills and their marks were compared based on the study rubric. Each debating group composes of two students. The results of pre-and post-tests were compared to determine if there is a significant development in the mean scores of the two tests. The program is carried out by using smart mobile phones as MALL device to present and teach speaking materials that are shown on the Koya University course module website as platform which is a Multimedia and learning management system.

The experimental group participants have been exposed to the mobile learning treatment to identify the effect of MALL devices on improving their speaking sub-skills for (15) weeks; while the control group participants have been taught according to the conventional instruction for the same period. In each session, a speaking sub-skill was taught, practiced inside and outside the classroom and assessed.



#### 4. Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data from pre-and post-tests about the impact of MALL devices on developing speaking sub-skills were quantitatively analyzed by using Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The t-test, mean and standard deviations of the two groups were compared. The t-test is one of the methods of statistics for comparing two groups. Best and Kahn (2006, p.407) see t-test as testing the significant deference between two means. In order to answer the proposed research question the two groups took 'pre-test' before and 'post-test' after the treatment in speaking sub-skills as shown in table 1.

**Table 1: Comparison of the Two Groups T-Test Results on the Pre-Posttest Mean Scores in Speaking Sub-skills**

Groups	Type of Tests	Means	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	Correlation		t-		p-value	sig.
					Value	p-value	achieved	table		
Experimental	pre-test	11.00		2.338	0.741	0.000	9.411	2.042	0.000	sig.
	post-test	14.10	-3.10	2.675						
Control	pre-test	9.31		1.892	0.856	0.000	1.186	2.056	0.247	not sig.
	post-test	9.54	-0.231	1.794						

#### 4.1 Results

As shown in table 1, the t-test results reveal that there is a significant development in the post-test speaking scores of the experimental group ( $t(9.411) = -3.10; p < 0.05$ ).

The experimental group post-test mean score (Mean = 14.10) was higher than the control group post-test mean score (Mean = 9.54).

The table also demonstrates that the experimental group's pre-test mean score (Mean=11.00) and post-test mean score (Mean = 14.10) were higher than the control group's pre-test mean score (Mean=9.31) and post-test mean score (Mean = 9.54). There was also a significant difference at  $p < 0.05$  for the two groups' test scores. The standard deviation for the control group was (1.794), while it was (2.675) for the experimental group in post-tests. It means that the more the standard deviation is closer to means, the more the variable in this case MALL was effective on developing speaking sub-skills. Considering the standard deviation for pre-test, (2.338) is closer to means (11.00) and  $p < 0.05$ ; it shows the value and significant effects of MALL on experimental group's speaking sub-skills development.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that MALL devices (smartphones) had a positive impact on enhancing EFL students' speaking sub skills. These developments were all due to the impact of the treatment. It is also concluded that the experimental group did well in speaking sub-skills than control group. It is recommended that mobile assisted language learning devices should be incorporated, used and integrated into English language teaching environments that may be useful in enhancing learners' language skills.

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## Appendices

### Appendix (A)

#### Pre and posttest questions for Speaking Sub-Skills Experimental and Control Groups (20 Marks)

##### Instructions:

- The speaking test will be conducted for two groups of 2 students at a time.
- Students will be provided with pen and paper to take notes.
- The teacher will be both an interlocutor and assessor along with another assessor.
- The teacher prepared a rubric to fairly assess the participants' speaking skills.

##### I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION - (1 minute)

(The Interlocutor makes the students feel comfortable)

Interlocutor: Good morning, I am ----- . Hope you are looking forward to this brief interaction.

##### II. MINI ARGUMENT (1 minute preparation + 5 minutes for the presentation)

Now, in this part of the test, students are given topics that have two sides such as **“Some people believe that smoking should not be permitted (allowed) at public places such as hospitals. However, there are other people who think that it should be permitted.”** Which idea do you agree or disagree with? Support your ideas with reasons and examples. Questions will be ranged from easy to difficult. (Yes, no questions to open-ended questions)

**Interlocutor:** (To both Groups) here is your topic. Please use pen and paper for writing points. After one minute I am going to ask you to present your views on the topic. I can ask any group to go first. So be prepared and ready.

##### The first topic:

Describe your favorite movie

- What's the name of the film?
- What's the theme of the film?
- Why do you like it?

##### The second topic:

Describe a happy event in your life?

- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen?
- What was it? Why do you remember it till now?

##### The third topic:

Describe your holidays

- 1) Where do you go for the holidays and how long do they last?
- 2) Who do you go with?
- 3) Talk about an interesting thing happened to you during your holidays
4. What do you usually do in your spare time?
5. Do you prefer to stay alone or with your friends?
6. What do you usually do on weekends and weekdays?

**The fourth topic:**

Travelling

1. Do you like traveling?
2. Do you like to travel alone or with your friends?
3. Have you traveled to other countries? What are they?
4. What are the benefits of traveling?
5. Why do people like traveling nowadays?

**The fifth topic:**

1. Describe a well-known person you know?

**The sixth topic:**

Describe a restaurant or a café you have ever been to?

**The seventh topic:**

Friends

- Do you have many friends? Are they casual acquaintances or close friends?
- Do you prefer to stay with your family or with your friends?
- Do you prefer one or two close friends or many friends?
- Talk about your best friend?
- How do you make friends?
- What do you usually do with your friends?

**Titles for Debate**

Smoking should not be permitted in public places such as hospitals. Smoking should be permitted in public places such as hospital.

Friends are more important than relatives. Relatives are more important than friends.

The Internet is very significant in our daily lives. The Internet is not very significant in our daily lives.

Private university is better than public university. Public university is better than private university.

Facebook helps us improve our English language. Facebook does not help us improve our English language.

Sports have many advantages. Sports do not have any advantages.

Money brings happiness to people. Money doesn't bring happiness to people.

**Appendix (B)**  
**Analytic Speaking Scoring Rubric**

<b>Language element observed and assessed</b>	<b>(Poor) 1</b>	<b>(Fair) 2</b>	<b>(Good) 3</b>	<b>(Very good) 4</b>	<b>(Excellent) 5</b>	<b>Score (5)</b>
1. Accuracy Pronunciation and intonation	- Insufficient accuracy in pronunciation; many grammatical errors - Communication is severely affected	- Frequently unintelligible articulations - Frequent phonological errors -Major communication problems	-Largely correct pronunciation & clear articulation except occasional errors -Some expressions cause stress without compromising understanding of spoken discourse	-Mostly correct pronunciation & clear articulation -Can be clearly understood most of the time; very few phonological errors - Some errors with word	-Can pronounce correctly & articulate clearly -Is always comprehensible; uses appropriate intonation -Very few or no errors with word endings	
2. Fluency & Coherence	- Noticeably/long pauses; rate of speech is slow - Frequent repetition and/or self correction - Links only basic sentences; breakdown	-Usually fluent; produces simple speech fluently, but loses coherence in complex communication -Often hesitates and/or resorts to slow	-Is willing to speak at length, however repetition is noticeable -Hesitates and/or self corrects; occasionally loses coherence -Topics mainly developed, but usually not logically	-Speaks without noticeable effort, with a little repetition - Demonstrates hesitation to find words or use correct grammatical structures and/or self correction -Topics not fully developed	-Speaks fluently almost with no repetition & minimal hesitation -Develops topic fully & coherently	



	wn of coherenc e evident	speech -Topics partly develop ed; not always conclud ed logically	concluded			
3.Vocabulary and Grammar	- Demonstrates almost no flexibility, and mostly struggles for appropriate words -Uses very basic vocabulary to express viewpoints	- Communicates with limited flexibility and appropriacy on some of the topics - Complex forms and sentence structures are rare; exhibits limited vocabulary to express new ideas	- Communicates with limited flexibility and appropriacy on most of the topics - Sometimes uses complex forms and sentence structures; has limited vocabulary to/describe /express new points	-Can express with some flexibility and appropriacy on most of the topics - Demonstrates ability to use complex forms and sentence structures most of the time; expresses with adequate vocabulary to express	-Can express with some flexibility and appropriacy on a variety of topics such as family, hobbies, work, travel and current events -frequently uses complex forms and sentence structures; has enough vocabulary to express himself/herself	
4.Interaction (Communicative Strategies)	- Contributions are mainly unrelated to those of other speaker Shows	- Contributions are often unrelated to those of the other speaker	-Develops interactions adequately makes however minimal effort to initiate conversation	-Interaction is adequately initiated and developed  -Can take turn but needs little	-Can initiate & logically develop simple conversation on familiar topics  -Can take	

	hardly any initiative in the development of conversation -Very limited Interaction -Can rarely use 'fillers'  -Can rarely use speech acts	Generally passive in the development of conversation  -Uses 'fillers' but incorrectly  -Can use some speech acts but incorrectly	-Needs constant prompting to take turns -Can use 'fillers' but inappropriately.  -Can use most speech acts	prompting -Can use 'fillers' but needs prompting. -Can use speech acts correctly but needs little prompting	turns Appropriately -Can use 'fillers' appropriately  - Can use speech acts correctly	
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Adapted from O'Malley and Pierce (1999) with some modifications and additions, see references