

## Chapter 28

# The Effect of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Learning–Language Lab vs. Mobile–Assisted Learning

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### ABSTRACT

*In recent years, the rapid advancement of information technology has had a great impact on our daily life and changed the world in which we operate; in particular, mobile devices have become more portable and powerful than ever. As a result, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and ubiquitous learning have been widely adopted in a variety of studies. However, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of teaching English for specific purposes (ESP), i.e., the Business Language Testing Service (BULATS) for college students in a language laboratory and through the mobile LINE app. A total of 72 college students were randomly assigned to two groups, a language lab group and a mobile learning group, for 10 weeks of instruction. The findings revealed that the students in the mobile learning group had significantly positive attitudes toward the teaching method and learning content and high user satisfaction. In addition, the learning performance of the students in the mobile learning group was better than that in the language lab group.*

### INTRODUCTION

A few decades ago, supporters of audiolingual theory in the 1950s brought the widespread use of the language laboratory to educational settings (Salaberry, 2001; Chinnery, 2006). As computers and technology evolved in the 1990s, interest in utilizing computers for language teaching and learning exploded (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Prior studies have revealed that computer-assisted language learning and blended teaching and learning can help enhance students' performance, learning motivation, and interest in learning a language (Hsin, 2015; Shih, 2013, 2011, 2010). Tseng, Kano, and Hsu (2014) also

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employed blended learning in mathematics teaching for junior high school students and found that the students' learning effectiveness improved. Lou, Chung, Shih, Tsai, & Tseng (2013) employed blended learning for TRIZ creative learning and found it was effective. Thus, blended learning, which combines traditional teaching (in-classroom instruction) with computer-assisted/educational technology learning, has become popular for some researchers.

However, Fotos and Browne (2013) mentioned that many language teachers are required to be in charge of setting up and operating a multimedia language laboratory or to be familiar with the applications of the multimedia language laboratory. In some cases, language teachers may need to design and implement CALL activities for language learners or to carry out an institution-wide project to work with other institutions. However, due to the rapid development of information, a new demand for language education has been driven by new pedagogies—computer-assisted instruction (CAI) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL)—and have become the mainstream for language education, after audiolingual theory (Fotos & Browne, 2013).

In recent years, the evolution of handheld portable mobile devices and information technology has resulted in changes in our social and economic lifestyles. In particular, smartphones have been produced to be much more portable than ever for users to get accustomed to. These portable learning devices are reshaping our lifestyle, learning styles, and even thinking styles. Sharples et al. (2009) mentioned that “we are in the age of personal and technical mobility, where mobile devices, including phones, MP3 and PDAs, are carried everywhere” (p. 243). These devices enable us to design learning differently, to connect and communicate with people in real and virtual worlds, as well as those in remote areas, to create communities among people on the move, and to support a lifetime of learning. Thus, learning through the use of portable mobile devices makes it even more potent than the customary forms and modes of traditional education.

Thus, in recent years, language teaching has somewhat shifted from conventional in-classroom instruction to CALL and then to MALL for many language teachers and researchers. Therefore, this study aimed to compare the effects of learning an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course, Business Language Testing Service (BULATS), through a mobile app (LINE) versus the effects of learning in a language laboratory for college English majors.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The emergence and evolution of information technologies have had significant impacts on educational technologies. In particular, mobile technology has gradually increased the potential of e-learning as a mode of delivery in education. With the development of mobile technology, mobile learning (also known as m-learning) has become a mainstream research domain. Researchers and scholars from various disciplines and subject areas have spent a great amount of effort in conducting related projects and studies to improve or boost the learner's learning experience, motivation, interest, or outcomes. Sharples, Arnedillo-Sánchez, Milrad, and Vavoula (2009) noted that over the past decade, mobile learning has grown significantly from a minor research interest into a great number of projects and studies in schools, workplaces, cities and rural areas worldwide. Each project or study has shown how mobile technology can provide new learning opportunities that extend within and beyond the traditional instructor-led classroom.

However, it is not easy to define the term mobile learning according to the literature. Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler (2005) noted that “mobile learning occurs when learner is not at a fixed, predetermined

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