EFFECTIVENESS OF SMARTPHONE ON EFL READING: LEARNERS' PERCEPTION IN ASIAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract:

COVID-19, the deadly and infectious virus, is a devastating blow for the world. Every single person in the world today has been impaired by Coronavirus in a variety of ways. The educational system across the globe has thundered this new phenomenon. Many institutions have moved their programs from offline to online mode. This pandemic left no other option for the academy but to adopt a new method of pedagogy. Smartphones would be a better way to promote online education. Smartphone users have been rising excessively in Asia in recent years. The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the learners' perception in Asian countries concerning the effectiveness of smartphone on EFL reading. This research is a systematic analysis of a qualitative nature. Altogether, 39 studies were selected on the learning perception of the smartphone for EFL reading. The studies included the following countries: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand. These nine countries have been chosen from countries in Asia whose official language is different from English. The findings indicate that the reading habit of Asian EFL learners is less and is slowly decreasing, as conventional classrooms may not fulfill learners' needs at times, as printed books are not fun. Using a smartphone for an EFL-reading can be a better choice because the smartphone is accessible and affordable. Leaners spend a significant amount of time on smartphones, especially on social networking sites. Learners use smartphone apps to read vocabulary. The learners stress that smartphones help you find out what to learn and, most importantly, how to learn. Learners accept that using smartphones to learn English enhances their critical thinking, innovative thinking, questionability, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork to some degree. Specifically, the use of

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smartphone guides them to a lifelong learner who is self-reliant. The common problem with smartphones is interrupted Wi-Fi connectivity. Using a smartphone can contribute to several health issues. The learners' critical issue is the irritation of the eyes caused by the brightness of the screen. Some apps have a few pedagogical elements for reading. Nevertheless, learners agree that a smartphone cannot substitute a good teacher. They need guidance from teachers to decide what to learn and how to learn. Overall, reading smartphones in English has a positive effect in Asia.

Keywords: EFL, smartphone, blended learning, COVID-19

1. Introduction

COVID-19, the lethal and contagious virus, has devastated the world. Every single person in the world today has been affected by the Coronavirus in several ways. This new phenomenon has thundered the educational system around the globe. Much of the earth is under quarantine (Dhawan, 2020; Rasmitadila et al., 2020). Many educational institutions have been closed down temporarily. The academic sessions have been cancelled and can be continued for a considerable period. Schools, universities have stopped teaching face-to-face (Daniel, 2020; Dhawan, 2020). According to UNESCO (2020), approximately 1.2 billion learners, or around 70 percent of the total enrolled in 144 countries, are affected by this pandemic (cited in Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

The second wave of the COVID -19 has already arrived. Academic institutions are struggling to deal with this situation and continue their academic programs to get back to their studies. Under these circumstances, online learning has become an inevitable choice for educational institutions. Many institutions have switched their program from offline to online mode. This pandemic has left no other way for the academy than to follow a new form of pedagogy. Some universities are entirely digitized and are continuing their academic activities online. The learners are studying from home now (Dhawan, 2020; Anongchanya & Boonmoh, 2015).

Modern ICT technology has progressed so far, and its consequences are so extensive that the option of online education is evident today. This global pandemic has pushed us to accept our education system being online and, ideally, even after a pandemic, to blend offline education with the online format. In this scenario, smartphones may be the perfect way to promote online education. Several researchers maintain that smartphone usage growth is proliferating. In 2013, the mobile subscription was the same number of people on the planet. Over the last twenty years, the growth of smartphones has been rising at a pace that no one has ever dreamed of (Samaha & Hawi, 2015; Alam, 2016; Gowthami & Kumar, 2016; Wanga et al., 2020).

The smartphone is a super version of your mobile phone. It provides a full operating software framework that offers a consistent interface and app developer platform. Users can play games, listen to music, enjoy videos, use cameras, calendars, the internet, and use them in many other ways. A small device has brought almost all of the services together for the user. The smartphone is a mini-computer in an individual's

palm. It can be used not only for communication but also for all personal computer programs (Samaha & Hawi, 2015; Alam, 2016; Gowthami & Kumar, 2016; Wanga et al., 2020).

English has been taught as a foreign language in many Asian countries. In Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia, English has been regarded as a language for education, business. English is a component of the school curriculum in these countries. Often learning the English language is viewed as an extracurricular activity. Learners who typically use English only in classroom settings learn English as a foreign language (EFL) (Amir, 2018; Mohamed, 2018; Artigala & Lakshini, 2019). A non-native speaker learning English in a context where all learners use a non-English Language and who does not use English for communication is studying EFL (Wei et al., 2018).

To be proficient in English, reading skill is indispensable. Any field of knowledge requires the ability to read well. The academic achievement of a learner depends very much on the ability to read. Reading skills are the most vital skills for EFL learners since English is not the primary language for EFL learners. Learners can overcome the deficiency in the English language, often by improving their reading skills. Reading is a required-ability in a learner's achievement, higher education, and career development. This ability increases sentence structure, vocabulary innately (Ahmed S., 2016; Manalu, 2019).

Asian EFL learners' reading habits are much lower. Learners in Asia have a limited vocabulary stock. Their average reading time is low as well. Usually, their reading practice is found only for examination purposes (Anongchanya & Boonmoh, 2015; Ahmed S., 2016; Alam, 2016; Manowong, 2017). Besides, the class size is big much of the time. Many schools do not have a library or a language laboratory (Ihsan & Diem, 2016). The classroom is mostly teacher-centric. In Asian schools, learners remain passive. They are not influenced to take an active part in classroom events. The teacher is talking the most in general. The contact hour of the classroom is meager. Teachers are not trained in pedagogy. Only the lecture method is followed in the classrooms (Godwin-Jones, 2017; Mohammadi et al., 2019).

Educational technology is not a rare experience in today's world. Teachers and learners of English are increasingly becoming accustomed to technology-oriented teaching (Dewi et al., 2020). In the last decade, blended learning, a mixture of face-to-face and technology-assisted education, has become a buzzword (Selma, 2018; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017). In recent years, MALL (Mobile-assisted language learning) has been increasingly integrated into the teaching of English-language learning techniques and strategies (Jeong, 2018).

Some institutions and many of the learners have adopted smartphones as teaching resources for learning English. There is a wide range of mobile applications available for listening, speaking, reading, writing, translating, newspaper, note-taking. Smartphones are easy to use. It brings immediate feedback. It is also a perfect self-learning platform (Homma, 2015; Mekhzoumi et al., 2018). Nunan argues that the communicative language teaching approach connects the classroom's learning experience with events outside the

classroom (Nunan, 1991, p. 280). Learners can add material to the learning process themselves. They can find their learning materials according to their level of interest (Benson, 2016). Juan and Yajie (2018) maintain that this scope of the self-learning process produces an autonomous learner. In the constructivist approach to learning, learners gain knowledge with the aid of authentic learning experiences (Tappoon, 2020).

The smartphone is a powerful source of authentic materials that is a core feature of EFL learners. The smartphone is a perfect platform for learner-learner and learner-teacher interaction, peer-teaching, self-assessment, and peer-review (Benson, 2016). Language learners use different learning strategies: direct, indirect (Alhaysony, 2017). So, using a smartphone is a good strategy for EFL learners.

Since smartphone users are booming in Asian countries (Hazaea & Alzubi, 2016), learners believe that smartphones can be a new model for English language teaching, particularly while reading (Inpin, 2016; Bristi, 2018); Howlett, 2019).

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the learners' perception in Asian countries concerning the effectiveness of smartphone on EFL reading.

2.1 Research Question
The research questions are:
1) What is the attitude of learners towards the conventional practice of teaching EFL?
2) What is the actual state of EFL learner's reading abilities?
3) How do learners perceive printed books?
4) How do learners spend their time with smartphones?
5) How does a learner benefit from a smartphone in EFL reading?
6) What are the issues of learning with smartphones?
7) What are the expectations of EFL learners from their teachers?

3. Theoretical Background

3.1. Constructivist Approach
Traditional teaching methods, based on teachers' role as presenters of information and learners as passive receivers of that information, have been unable to address the fundamental language skills. Instead of communicating knowledge, the instruction should encourage the active building of knowledge and skills in learners. Similarly, teachers' role in making the learners aware of these skills and abilities is crucial. Therefore, to meet such concerns, educators should follow more effective pedagogical methods. The constructivist approach is a better option that teachers can use to achieve more modern educational goals, stressing knowledge creation in a learner-centered environment (Mighani et al., 2019).

Bruner, Piaget, and Vygotsky are the pioneers of the constructivist approach in teaching and learning. Their psychological and pedagogical theories are the basis of this

approach. In this approach, learners formulate their knowledge and skills through certain learning events, modeling authentic practical activities where such knowledge and skills are required (Tarnopolsky, 2017). The constructivist approach emphasizes improving the learners' potentials to create their understanding. This understanding is developed through reasoning procedures by adding experience with the new one. In the constructivist approach, learners actively participate in the reasoning process (Ardiasih et al., 2018; Listyoasih, 2019).

The prime concentration of this approach is learner-centered learning, where the learners are motivated to learn (Asiksoy & Ozdamil, 2017). Active learners are more responsible for their learning outcomes. These characteristics improve their feeling of learners' autonomy. They learn themselves, not just collecting from outsides (Ardiasih et al., 2018), or learners do not collect knowledge directly instead, they create an experience in a meaningful way independently and socially (Asiksoy & Ozdamil, 2017).

The constructivist approach has two subsections- cognitive and social. Cognitive constructivism is based on the theories of the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. Social constructivism is on the views of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (Listyoasih, 2019).

Piaget's theoretical concepts comprise of scheme, assimilation, accommodation, and equilibrium. When interacting with objects, people, and circumstances in life, the scheme is a prior personal experience and behavioral patterns. Assimilation adjusts the latest knowledge in the scheme that is in memory. Accommodation is modifying the current scheme to suit the newest concept. Equilibrium is a system in which children find a balance between applying prior information (assimilation) and changing actions to accommodate new knowledge (accommodation). It helps clarify how children can switch from one stage of thought to another. Learning is a process of development involving transformation, self-emergence, and rebuilding that constructs based on existing learning experiences. In discovering or modifying complex ideas, the learner must always be involved, and they should embrace and master the information as newfound information (Asiksoy & Ozdamil, 2017).

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is one of Vygotsky's significant concepts in the pedagogical domain. ZPD is the space between what Vygotsky calls real development (what the learner can do independently) and 'potential' progress (what the learner can do in the future, with the others' aid). ZPD is a conceptual area of comprehension that is beyond the range of learners' present knowledge. Thus, by moving out of ZPD and creating a whole new higher ZPD, learners can construct their cognitive (Listyoasih, 2019).

In this approach, the classroom is not a setting for information handover, preferably a setting for question-answer, problem-solving, and working together. The learner gets a comprehensive learning experience in a classroom where activities are based on the constructivist approach (Asiksoy & Ozdamil, 2017). Rather than learning outcomes, the constructivist approach underscores the learning process. The interaction between learner-teacher and learner-learner implements this process (Listyoasih, 2019).

Teachers act as facilitators and guides, while learners are interested in shaping their learning and creating a context (Jeong, 2018).

The focus in the constructivist view of EFL has been transferred to learners. As a result, English language learners can take the initiative by improving communicative skills in their learning, rather than relying on the teacher in traditional English language classrooms. Learners can start self-learning with the help of technology-based language materials. Technology-based language materials are authentic and structured in the substantive sense of the existing pedagogical paradigm of constructivism (Jeong, 2018). The function of technology for the constructivist approach is vital. The incorporation of technology in the constructivist approach positively contributes to learners' success, attitude, and motivation towards learning. It helps learners create knowledge, facilitate understanding, and communicate during the teaching-learning period. Technology is an efficacious resource that offers the learners a rich learning environment, makes learners involved in the learning process (Asiksoy & Ozdamil, 2017; Jeong, 2018).

To practice language skills: including speaking, listening, writing, and reading, schools worldwide, are starting to introduce technology in the EFL classroom. The use of genuine multimedia in language classrooms has many advantages because it can provide actual and self-motivated learning experiences. In language learning, actual multimedia content can also foster inspiration and autonomy for learners as well as learning interests. Learners, through the use of multimedia-related classroom techniques, develop better oral skills. The constructivist method has been regarded as an essential tool in studying and teaching foreign languages (Jeong, 2018).

Vocabulary learning plays a vital role in developing reading skills in EFL. Constructivist learners are knowledge creators, productive critical thinkers, and interpreters throughout the learning process in the vocabulary learning process. With the introduction of technology, constructivist learners regularly engage with the vocabulary learning environment to create meanings based on their previous accumulated experiences. When learners are engaged in creating meaning through interactive processes, vocabulary instruction is seen to be more successful (Wang F., 2015; Jeong, 2018).

3.2. Communicative Language Teaching and Communicative Competence

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was a predominant approach to language teaching in the 1970s. Concerning the grammar-translation process and the audio-lingual method, CLT was introduced in the 1960s. CLT was developed primarily for the ESL (English as a Second Language) context and introduced in English-speaking countries (Holliday, 1994). Communicative competence is the main focus of the CLT. The CLT goal is to have learners with opportunities to learn and apply language skills in a target language context. According to Mey (1998), CLT's core tenets comprise learning-centered classrooms, opportunities to build an extensive repository of activities, the multiple responsibilities of teachers, and the use of authentic materials (cited in Farooq, 2015).

The basic concept of CLT is communicative competence. Hymes (1971) proposed this idea. The author referred not only to the inferential comprehension of the language

and the ability to use it properly, this idea was also proposed as a disagreement with Chomsky's concept of idealistic concepts purely of linguistic competence. According to Chomsky, the human has an abstract brain faculty that can generate grammatically correct sentences. Hymes (1971), on the other hand, argued that linguistic ideas are required to be considered in the context of communication and culture. The author held that the speaker must be mindful of the speech community's context when communicating with the target language. As an approach to foreign and second languages, CLT aims at developing communicative competence (Hymes, 1971).

Nunan (1991, p. 280) focuses on five features of communicative competence — learning to communicate, the inclusion of authentic texts in the learning environment, the provision of opportunities to concentrate on language and learning processes, the enhancement of learner's own experience of language learning; and the linking of classroom learning experience to activities outside the classroom. Nunan argues that to develop communicative competence, the instructor needs to have a real context as a practical technique. Furthermore, in a natural context, a speaker faces an unpredictable situation where the drilled language is not enough. The speaker must spontaneously use the language in an authentic context, depending on the time-place-person (Nunan, 1991). The Communicative Competence Model has three basic parts: Grammatical Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, and Strategic Competence. Grammatical competence is characterized in terms of knowledge by the mastery of language. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the proper utterances generated in the context of various social contexts. Strategic maturity is the mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication techniques to compensate for the deterioration of interactions (Hussein & Elttayef, 2017). The development of communicative competence in EFL has given rise to the interest of many researchers and educators. The constructivist movement has influenced the emphasis on social interaction and communicative skills in the target language. From a constructivist point of view, the approach of education has switched from teacher-centered to learner-centered pedagogy (Jeong, 2018).

3.3. Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy (LA) is undoubtedly one of the essential topics of emerging trends for the ELT (English Language Teaching). It became popular as CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) became the leading language teaching approach (Yoon, 2016). In the 1980s, Henri Holec originally introduced the idea of "learner autonomy" in the teaching of foreign languages. The author defined learning autonomy as the capability to take control of one's learning. The learning-centered teaching approach is often recognized for learner autonomy. Learning autonomy will make learning more purposeful, inspire, and contribute to good learning (Holec, 1981).

An autonomous learner will take full responsibility for one 's learning. Autonomous learners are required to set their learning objectives, learning material, learning method, assessment method, i.e., absolute control over one's overall learning process. There are three parts of Autonomous Learning in the EFL – attitude, ability, and environment. Attitude is described as a positive approach to English language learning.

A learner who can think independently can learn independently. The environment refers to the required atmosphere in which the skills gained are to be applied. In short, ([Juan & Yajie, 2018](#)).

To encourage learner autonomy, teachers have a significant part in performing. LA-related myths have come to light due to the individualistic character of [Holec's (1981)](#) description, where learners have been called autonomous if they have the capacity, desire, and power over their decisions on setting the learning goals ([Cakici, 2017](#); [Yasmin & Sohail, 2018](#)). [Juan and Yajie (2018)](#) argue that autonomous learning does not mean that the teacher has no role in the learning process. The teacher ought to be involved to some degree in promoting learning autonomy. Learner Autonomy requires learners' implementation of independent learning along with the teacher's suggestions. The teacher should provide adequate feedback on selecting learning objectives, content, strategies, preparation, assessment, and overall decision-making.

To improve the learner's independence, the teacher must perform at least three roles: facilitator, tutor, resource. As a facilitator, a teacher who understands and encourages, as a tutor, a teacher who provides advice and recommendations, and as a resource, a teacher suggests information based on the learners' needs. If the teacher is not involved in the learner's learning process, the process can turn into a disorder. Yang (1998) shows that without adequate teacher guidance and mentoring, learners encounter problems in setting goals, preparing, arranging, and choosing learning material (cited in ([Yasmin & Sohail, 2018](#)).

Nevertheless, what is the actual situation of the learner autonomy practice in classrooms? Balçıkanlı (2010) explored the experience of learners and English teachers in Turkey by encouraging learner autonomy. Findings obtained from the focus group discussion of 20 teachers and learners indicate that both learners and trainers are optimistic about learners' role in academic decision making. But then again, the teachers are not ready to bring the learners into the process of choosing textbooks and discipline (cited in [Yasmin & Sohail, 2018](#)). Similar results are found in Nakata's Mixed Methodology Study (2011), where the researcher decided to examine Japanese school teachers (cited in [Yasmin & Sohail, 2018](#)). Nasri et al. (2015) directed research on Iranian school teachers emphasizing the autonomy of learners. The findings show that learners in describing the previous lesson, working together in groups, determining the textbook topics' sequence are some of the typical activities of teachers in the name of learner autonomy (cited in [Yasmin & Sohail, 2018](#)).

3.4. Language Learning Strategy

People have been using language learning strategies (LLS) for thousands of years. However, LLS has been a research concern for the past fifty years or so. Researchers want to know how people become more successful in learning and the reasons for success ([Alhaysony, 2017](#)). The process of language learning has transitioned from teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach in recent decades. The teacher's role in learner-centeredness is to facilitate the learners. Smartphone, a breakthrough in this century, has

fundamentally changed the arena of language learning strategy that brings the notion of learner-centeredness powerfully (Alzubi & Singh, 2017).

LLS is explained as distinct tasks performed by a learner to make learning productive, faster, exciting, and accelerated. Many characteristics distinguish the LLS. First of all, LLS stimulates learners to become self-directed. Second, the instructor is a guide, mentor, coordinator. Learner focuses not only on academic dimensions but also on metacognitive, affective, and social functions. The teacher needs to know when the learner uses the LLS, what LLS the learners follow (Oxford, 1990).

LLS is divided into two effective strategies: direct and indirect. Direct strategies mean direct learning and practicing language materials. These methods concentrate on what the learner directly originates. Direct strategies are subdivided into three groups: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. Indirect methods are tacit tactics. These strategies are often classified into metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies (Alhaysony, 2017).

As a taxonomy of direct strategies, memory strategies are used for recalling information. Cognitive strategies are used for application and production. Compensation strategies are meant to be using language despite knowledge gaps. As for the taxonomy of indirect strategies, Metacognitive strategies help organize the learning process by preparing, coordinating, concentrating, and assessing their learning process. Affective strategies that allow the control of emotions are made up of lowering the learner's anxiety, encouraging them, and taking on emotional temperatures. Finally, social strategies learn, along with others, by asking questions, cooperating, and empathizing (Alhaysony, 2017).

Research highlighting LLS via smartphones in formal and informal learning contexts for reading EFL was conducted. The finding reveals that the learners appreciate smartphones as an EFL strategy inside and outside the classroom (Marzban and Barati 2016; Alzubi & Singh, 2017). Amir (2018) looks at 8th-Grade learners' common learning strategies. The results show that reading and writing strategies are mostly used. The most common technique of reading is dictionaries.

3.5. Blended Learning

In the last decade, blended learning has been a buzzword. Blended learning is a pedagogical style that incorporates classroom socialization processes with the technologically improved online learning opportunities. Commonly blended learning is a mixture of face-to-face and technology-assisted teaching-learning. Traditional lectures are applied to the blended classroom through technology-assisted instructions (Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017; Selma, 2018). Multiple pedagogical theories influence the idea of blended learning. Blended may involve and merge behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism at some stages. Based on observable behavior, behaviorism has played a part in the mental process. Cognitivist views of learning emphasize the internal mechanisms of learners, such as memory, motivation, reflection. Constructivism stresses learners' perception in the creation and interpretation of knowledge (Roomy & Althewini, 2019).

Blended learning is possibly a better way of providing instructional resources and guidance to new generations of students and teachers of education at all levels (Akbarov et al., 2018). In the traditional formal classroom, the lecture time is definite, and the involvement of all learners is challenging. These limitations are dissolved in a blended classroom (Selma, 2018). The perceptions towards blended learning can be explored in the following six learning aspects: learning flexibility, study management, technology, online learning, online engagement, and classroom instruction (Akbarov et al., 2018). Blended learning has six benefits: pedagogical resources; access to education; social interaction; personal agency, power, choice; cost-effectiveness, and ease of revision (Alnoori & Obaid, 2017).

Jou et al. (2016) find that a blended approach has a practical effect on academic learners' performance. Educators use this method because the conventional class joined by online learning and materials makes teaching more effective. Selma (2018) argues that teachers are interested in taking lessons with this approach because it creates curiosity for learning. The regular class with online support makes the study enticing. Blended learning enhances communication amongst learners, motivates them, and initiates a learning-centered environment (Lin et al., 2017).

Blended learning complements language skills, cultivates deeper understanding that encourages learners to be active and engaged in the educational process. Learners enjoy blended learning because it improves critical thinking skills. Blended learning produces higher academic achievements compared to sole online learning (Akbarov et al., 2018). In general, adopting a blended learning model to classroom practices has a substantial positive consequence on student attitudes towards this learning system (Lin et al., 2017; Saltan, 2017; Kheirzadeh & Birgani, 2018).

In the cross-sectional research, Akbarov et al. (2018) have found that in some traditional schools where English is taught, learners use gadgets such as smartphones, laptops, tablets. Their attachment to these devices is so constant that educators cannot ignore it. Instead, the teacher encourages learners to be effective at using these devices to learn English, and the teacher uses digital tools proportionately in pedagogy. This study argues that the combination of face-to-face and online learning has a positive impact on English teaching.

At times, it is challenging for EFL teachers to integrate blended learning since teaching reading requires compound tasks like vocabulary building, logical thinking skills, inferences, grammatical knowledge, and cultural awareness. While teachers work hard and spend a lot of time teaching reading, learners score low results. New issues can be generated by adding other types of text through the web or digital media. Since teaching reading is a complex process, the learners need several skills to excel in reading English. The teachers typically use prescribed books and conventional methods. They do not tend to provide additional materials to students, use modern technologies, or use another way of testing their reading abilities, except by tests or other types of classroom input for each task. The contact time is limited, and the teachers are not confident if the learners are inspired to get the learning material in a digital format. One of the crucial reasons for teachers' lack of interest in blended learning is the absence of training. Both

the teachers and the learners have almost no training in modern technology (Tosun, 2015; Ghazizadeh & Fatemipour, 2017; Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Roomy & Althewini, 2019; Ulker, 2019).

Blended learning has a range of models. Dudeney and Hockly (2007) propose a blended learning model comprising 75% online and 25% face-to-face learning (cited in Alnoori & Obaid, 2017). Alnoori and Obaid (2017) recommend four blended learning models – the Rotation Model, the Flex Model, the Self-Blend Model, and the Enriched-Virtual Model. The rotation model focuses more on the instructor and less on the learner. Unlike the Rotation model, the Flex model relies heavily on technology, and the teacher's responsibility is to facilitate this. The Flex model can be suitable for higher-level learners. In the Self-blend model, the teacher offers additional knowledge on the subject of the lesson. In the Enriched Virtual Model, students actively participate in study sessions from different locations across the globe. Communication is on the screen of the computer. Learners can see a teacher's face and vice versa. They can ask questions and get answers, but all activities take place online (Tosun, 2015; Claypole, 2016; Dudeney & Hockly, 2007).

3.6. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

With the introduction of mobile technology, the entire education system has taken new direction, and teaching and learning have become more learning-centric and have led learners to become more independent (Rao, 2019). In recent years, Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has been steadily incorporated into English language teaching-learning techniques and strategies. To improve English learning, MALL can generally be categorized as any educational activity that enables English language learners to use authentic multimedia content (Jeong, 2018).

In developing the current English trend, the accessibility and affordability of well-resourced multimedia apparatuses and various multimodal English language learning and teaching materials in language classrooms have played a significant role. The growing proliferation of multimedia and technological advances has made it conceivable for English language teachers and curriculum designers to rethink traditional teaching resources and English methods that have become somewhat outmoded in the era of modern digital technologies (Jeong, 2018).

Mobile learning platforms include smartphones, cell phones, tablets, palms, portable computers, tablet PCs, laptops, and personal media players (Rao, 2019). Learning English with a mobile device encompasses performing tasks by obtaining online learning materials and transferring data such as texts, sounds, images, or movies through devices, no matter where and when one may be (Sato et al., 2015).

Kearney et al. (2012) explain mobile learning's pedagogical views in three theories: personalization, authenticity, and cooperation (cited in Hui-Ya, 2016). The use of a mobile device authorizes broader access to authentic language tools. It enables learners to actively search for learning resources that can be seen as a significant attribute of learners who take ownership of learning material (Sato et al., 2015). MALL is considered more beneficial for learners to learn new concepts that are not addressed in the classroom. Learners can look for additional information reviewed at the school. Mobile apps help

develop their language skills, complete tasks, prepare assignments, improve language skills, enrich vocabulary and grammar, send and receive messages, and play language games. The learners who are allowed to use mobile devices inside the classroom in several educational institutions improve significantly (Rao, 2019).

In an extensive review of MALL studies highlighting speaking and listening skills, Kukulska-Hulme & Shield (2007) have found that MALL varies from computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in terms of individual use, device portability that permits new ways of leaning, convenient access, and connectivity through various contexts of use. MALL emphasizes more learner-centered learning than the conventional teaching practice. In general, this shows that mobile-assisted language learning has become broadly accepted as research results in a positive attitude between learners and teachers (cited in Azli et al., 2018).

Meihuish and Falloon (2010) maintain that mobile devices provide five different educational opportunities: (1) portability: mobile devices offer accessibility in an attempt to transform the paradigm of learning activities; (2) affordable and omnipresent access: mobile devices put web access and functionality in the hands of more users than any other digital technology; (3) Just-in-time learning opportunities: mobile devices can decentralize learning experience, and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) enables discovery and collaboration in multiple contexts using interactive tools; (4) Connection and convergence: mobile devices link learners to other users, other devices, different platforms, and other technologies; (5) Individualized and customized experience: mobile devices provide a uniqueness that can be adapted to the individual's direction of inquiry (cited in Yeh & Wu, 2015).

New mobile technology works well for teachers to teach creatively (Rao, 2019). For teachers' roles, Hui-Ya (2016) suggests that the design of mobile learning lectures must be coupled with other learning theories for improvement. To promote effective learning through mobile technology, the teacher needs to transform teaching and presentation methods to fulfill learners' diverse needs and their learning styles (Hui-Ya, 2016). Simultaneously, the teacher has to remind learners to use their mobile devices only to enhance their learning and not for any other reason (Rao, 2019).

3.7. Smartphone and EFL

Yeh and Wu (2015) argue that mobile devices such as smartphones have been seen as a widespread practice in the academic arena, especially in language education, over the last few years. For example, researchers have continuously explored the prospects and impacts of using mobile devices for learning L2 (second language). They study several studies and contend that mobile devices are increasingly used in reading, vocabulary learning, grammar teaching, listening, speaking, and writing.

Smartphone apps make reading easier. Yeh and Wu (2015) hold that there are hundreds of apps in the Google Play store (https://play.google.com/store/apps) for reading annotation purposes. Typical annotation resources in the mobile annotation app include highlights, accents, snapshots, sticky notes, pop-up comment windows, text entry marks, a range of lines and arrows, freehand sketches. Mobility of smartphone

annotations ensures that learners may do reading annotation activities in any possible place where mobile devices may access the Internet, such as a train, a library, a street walk, or a coffee shop.

Ahmed S. T. (2019) claims that social media apps in smartphones such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter help achieve this aim by offering adequate room for conversation, engagement, and free learning. Jafari and Chalak (2016) look at how the app affects the teaching of Iranian EFL junior school students' vocabulary. A pre-test and post-test were performed to assess the learners' vocabulary level before and after the study. The experimental group received vocabulary instructions, four days a week, for four weeks, using WhatsApp, while the control group learned the vocabulary of their textbooks in the classroom using conventional methods used in all Iranian schools to teach English. The researcher notices that WhatsApp plays a significant role in vocabulary learning. The study of Fattah (2015) and Flores (2015) reflect similar results.

In the project focusing on the mobile device used by Japanese University learners, Thornton and Houser (2005) (cited in Hulse, 2018) send English vocabulary via email three times per day to 44 undergraduate learners. Researchers find learners' experience of smartphones to be optimistic. Learners take photographs of the whiteboard to collect lecture notes, record their teachers to remember how those words are pronounced. They use the Google Voice Recognition feature when practicing pronunciation, use smartphone flashcard applications to practice their vocabulary, and find other related content to improve their English reading skills.

Hulse (2018) examines the use of the smartphone as an educational tool in the EFL classroom. One hundred one first-year students from Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University in Japan participated in this study. All of the learners in this study indicated owning personal smartphones. When asked how smartphones increase their motivation for learning English, the participants note that their motivation is improved because using smartphones is enjoyable. Since they are familiar with smartphones and therefore find learning more comfortable, they can compete with their peers, smartphones are more interactive than textbooks, and learning by smartphones saves their time.

In evaluating Japanese students' attitudes towards using smartphones to learn English, it is found that some students are willing to use smartphones in the classroom. Some feel relaxed using smartphones; some enjoy using smartphones and are looking forward to using smartphones. These findings are mostly positive, demonstrating that many students have a positive attitude towards learning English using smartphones. Many students think that smartphones may help them learn, speed up the lessons, boost their knowledge and word memorization, and reduce the gap between students and teachers (Hulse, 2018).

Realistic interaction and contextualized language materials are essential for EFL learners to enhance their language skills. Because daily class time is typically minimal, it is challenging to provide space for contextualized language and interactions. Therefore, the smartphone plays an alternative method for learners to communicate in a practical situation to improve English communication skills (Ahmed S. T., 2019).

Unlike the advantages of a smartphone, many learners prefer a paper-based book to a digital one. Some learners report eye pressure, headache, and some believe their reading pace slows down when reading on a smartphone. Smartphones have some technological hurdles, such as limited storage, shortened battery life, lack of Wi-Fi connectivity, reduced speed, small screens, low resolution. Low resolution can impair the eyesight of the learners. Smartphones often build psychological barriers for learners, as their general understanding of the smartphone is to use it as an entertainment medium rather than a learning tool. Some learners may be addicted to the use of smartphones. Sometimes getting calls, texting, keeping eyes on notification light decreases classroom interaction. (Stockwell, 2008; Hulse, 2018; Howarth & Bollen, 2019). White and Mills (2014) note that smartphones are a popular device for Japanese learners. Yet, they do not routinely use smartphones for educational purposes.

4. Methodology

This study is a systematic review, qualitative in nature. The systematic review is considered a significant field of methodological progress (Gough et al, 2012). A systematic review is a method of accumulating substantial information and leading to responses to questions about what does work and what does not. A single study can be quite relevant. But, a single study, at times, is not methodologically sound, whose results are hardly generalizable. A single study is usually considered in a particular context. There may be other contexts that need to be explored (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006).

To obtain better results of the research question of a systematic review, the mindset of the researcher has to be like a judge rather than a lawyer. A judge examines all the possible aspects to get an equitable judgment. On the other hand, a lawyer seeks to make the best logic possible in favor of his or her argument (Siddaway et al, 2019).

The goal of a systematic review is to address specific questions rather than deliver a simple overview of the evidence. A systematic review requires a well-formed research question from the beginning, and this question will frame the whole review protocol, direct information of the search strategy, inclusion criteria, and data extraction (Butler et al., 2016).

Gough et al (2012) maintain that systematic review demands three fundamental activities: pinpointing and cataloging the relevant research, critical reviewing research reports in a systematic process, assimilating the findings into a coherent statement. Piper (2013) holds that a systematic review must explain and rationalize the sources of the findings, search terms, inclusion, and exclusion criteria.

4.1. Data Collection

In this analysis, two essential protocols were followed at the data collection stage. The first stage was to search for studies relevant to this study's topic from various academic sources, including (a) relevant journals, (b) computerized bibliographic databases, (c) review articles, (d) references in key studies, and (e) conference papers. The second stage involves the development of inclusion and exclusion criteria. In this stage, previous

studies on the introduction of the smartphone on EFL reading were nominated and examined based on the criteria to specify the relevant studies for additional analysis.

4.1.1. Identification of Relevant Journals

The following were the primary keywords used in various combinations to start searching the database in the academic search engine – Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.com/):

a) EFL reading with smartphone EFL OR MALL OR smartphone
b) EFL reading with smartphone reading OR teaching OR learning
c) EFL reading with smartphone Mobile
d) smartphone in EFL reading "Blended learning",
e) allintitle: smartphone EFL,
f) mobile learning smartphone "EFL reading",
g) smartphone apps "EFL reading",
h) smartphone apps student OR perception "EFL reading".

4.1.2. Computerized Bibliographic Databases Search

The keywords and combinations stated above were applied to search useful studies from computerized bibliographic databases. Computerized bibliographic databases search comprised (a) Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), (b) Project Muse, (c) Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), (d) JSTOR Arts and Science, (e) Social Science Citation Index (SSCI).

4.1.3. Notable EFL Academic Journal Search

The notable EFL academic journals that were used to look for research articles are- the TESOL Canada Journal, the Taiwan Journal of TESOL, Language Teaching and Learning, the Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, Studies in English Language and Literature, TESOL Quarterly, The Modern Language Journal, the Journal of East Asian Linguistics, the Journal of Second Language Writing, Educational Technology Research & Development, Education Technology & Society, English for Specific Purposes, Foreign Language Annuals, International Review of Applied Linguistics.

4.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for inclusion and exclusion are essential to the systematic review. The inclusion and exclusion criteria set the domain for review, determine potential studies. The two criteria assist in reducing the personal bias of the reviewer. It remaps the cornerstone that filters out the studies, no matter the reviewer's personal belief. The researcher must maintain a delicate balance between searching with too circumscribed and too voluminous keywords. Since too limited keywords may lose track of relevant papers, and too extensive keywords may contain irrelevant papers (Butler et al., 2016). A total of 210 studies were selected as appropriate for the preliminary literature search. After primary selection, these studies were evaluated based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria.

4.2.1. Inclusion Criteria

1) The studies were expected to be published between 2015 and 2020. This timeline has been decided by the fact that smartphone users have been growing excessively in Asia in recent years (Chen H., 2015; Nortajuddin, 2020; Tech Collective, 2020; Wikipedia, 2020).

2) These studies' participants or sample covered the learners' perception for this systematic review.

3) The studies, searched with the keywords mentioned earlier, covered the following countries – Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and Thailand. These nine countries were purposively selected from those countries in Asia whose official language is different from English. The countries were purposively selected because, in purposive sampling, the researcher selects samples that are rich in information according to the research questions (Creswell, 2012).

4) The studies considered every research design.

5) Both inside and outside the classroom setting were taken into account for context's concern.

6) The full text of the articles was considered only for review.

4.2.2. Exclusion Criteria

Studies with the following attributes were excluded:

1. Studies that were published before 2015.
2. The countries outside of Asia.
3. Studies of Asian countries whose official language is English.
4. Abstract-only papers and articles without full text available.

4.3. Study-level Coding

Study-level coding aims to explain how the reviewer investigates the study, catalogs studies based on research questions, and chooses enough data for inclusion (Norris & Ortega, 2020). The study-level coding for the 39 studies includes the following items: (a) Country, (b) in-text citation, (c) Title, (d) research design, (e) participation, and sample size. The discussion of the review is classified based on seven research questions.

4.4. Limitation

The reviewer must confirm that the studies demonstrate the relevant results of the study in its field. The reviewer needs to verify if the studies are reliable, and the results are reasonable representations of the studies. To inspect the reliability of the studies, the researcher must pay careful attention to the statements of the report and ensure that the conclusions are accurate according to the data (Harden & Thomas, 2007). A wide variety of databases and peer-reviewed journals are recommended for the systematic review. The researcher's personal bias and subjectivity are concerns of a systematic review (Mallett et al, 2012). Due to time constraints, only 39 papers were reviewed in this report.

5. Results

5.1. Overview of the Eligible Results

Altogether, 39 studies were selected on learners' perception of introducing the smartphone for EFL reading. The studies originated in nine different countries. The largest number of studies have been conducted in Indonesia. The majority of participants were tertiary-level learners. Most of the studies were published in the year 2019.

Table 1: An Overview of the Eligible Results

no	Country	In text citation	Title	Research design	Participants and sample size
1	Bangladesh	(Alam, 2016)	Influence of digital technology in EFL learning at Bangladeshi Universities	Mixed Method	140 students from 4 public and 6 private Universities
2	Bangladesh	(Hossain, 2018)	Exploiting Smartphones and Apps for Language Learning: A Case Study with the EFL Learners in a Bangladeshi University	Mixed Method	150 Second year University students
3	Bangladesh	(Hasan et al., 2015)	Mobile Internet as a Learning Assistant for Secondary and Higher Secondary Students: The Case of Bangladesh	Experimental design	200 Participants from 5 secondary and higher secondary educational institutions
4	Bangladesh	(Rimi, 2019)	Online Reading Habits of University Students in Bangladesh & Its Effects in ESL Classroom	Qualitative Method	80 students from two different universities
5	Indonesia	(Cholis et al., 2018)	The Implementation of Mall in Reading Comprehension: Students' Perspectives	Descriptive qualitative	3 students
6	Indonesia	(Muslaini et al., 2018)	A Preliminary Study of EFL Reading Android Application Development	Mixed Method	33 tenth grade students at one of the senior high schools
7	Indonesia	(Fauzi, 2018)	The impact of mobile gadget in EFL learning: perceptions of EFL undergraduates	Quantitative Method	30 undergraduate students majoring in accounting study Serang Raya University
8	Indonesia	(Dewi et al., 2020)	The Implementation of Google Classroom in Improving Student's Reading Comprehension at MAN 4 Jakarta	Mixed Method	27 students on grade XI of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri
9	Indonesia	(Abdullah et al., 2020)	Digitalization towards Reading Habits: How do Today's EFL University Students Read?	Descriptive qualitative design	36 fourth-year students of Universitas Islam Malang

no	Country	In text citation	Title	Research design	Participants and sample size
10	Indonesia	(Hamim et al., 2019)	The Effect of on-Screen Reading on the Students Reading Comprehension Ability at Second Grade of Man Kota Batu	Pre-experimental research	28 School students
11	Indonesia	(Wisnuwardana, 2019)	Students' Attitudes towards the Use of Smartphone for Language Learning Purposes	Mixed Method	200 respondents of Senior High School students
12	Indonesia	(Manalu, 2019)	Students' Perception of Digital Texts Reading: A Case Study at the English Education Department of Universitas Kristen Indonesia	Mixed Method	65 students of English Education Department of Universitas Kristen Indonesia
13	Indonesia	(Putra & Weny, 2017)	Making Most of Online News (Paper) for Extensive Reading for EFL Learners in Indonesia: It's Plausibility & Challenges	Quantitative Method	45 students from Universitas Negeri Malang
14	Iran	(Gheytasi et al., 2015)	The Effect of Smartphone on the Reading Comprehension Proficiency of Iranian EFL Learners	Experimental design	40 high school students in Ilam Mojtama Fani Tehran English Language Institute
15	Iran	(Nami, 2020)	Educational smartphone apps for language learning in higher education: Students' choices and perceptions	Descriptive survey design	447 Bachelor of Science students at Amirkabir University of Technology
16	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	(Hazaea, 2018)	Impact of Mobile Assisted Language Learning on Learner Autonomy in EFL Reading Context	Qualitative action research	30 students at the Preparatory Year at Najran University
17	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	(Alzubi et al., 2019)	Investigating Reading Learning Strategies through Smartphones on Saudi Learners' Psychological Autonomy in Reading Context	Quantitative Method	70 students at the preparatory year at Najran University
18	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	(Hazaea & Alzubi, 2016)	The Effectiveness of Using Mobile on EFL Learners' Reading Practices in Najran University	Experimental design	30 male students at the Preparatory Year at Najran University
19	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	(Alzubi & Singh, 2017)	The Use of language learning strategies through smartphones in improving learner autonomy in EFL reading among undergraduates in Saudi Arabia	Exploratory study	32 randomly selected EFL undergraduates of foundation year at Najran University
20	Malaysia	(Sukor & Ali, 2019)	Smartphone applications for young English language learners	Systematic review method	
21	Malaysia	(Ramamuruthy & Rao, 2015)	Smartphones Promote Autonomous Learning in ESL Classrooms	Quantitative Method	70 Diploma students
22	Malaysia	(Mekhzoumi et al., 2018)	Determinants of Mobile Applications Acceptance for English Language Learning in Universiti Utara Malaysia	Quantitative Method	674 undergraduate students
23	Malaysia	(Malek et al., 2018)	Smartphone use for language receptive skills: A guided approach	Experimental design	108 Diploma students

no	Country	In text citation	Title	Research design	Participants and sample size
24	Malaysia	(Ahmed S., 2016)	Reading habits and attitudes of UMSKAL undergraduates	Mixed Method	314 students (1st & 2nd Year) from Universiti Malaysia Sabah
25	Nepal	(Singh, 2019)	Students' perspectives on technology integration in ELT	Qualitative Method	60 Students of 10th Grade
26	Nepal	(Bhattarai, 2016)	A Survey on the use of Smart Phone Dictionaries for Vocabulary Learning	Survey based research	120 students from the campuses randomly
27	Sri Lanka	(Prasangani, 2019)	Digital Platforms to Motivate English Learning among Young Learners in Sri Lanka	Quantitative Method	Sri Lankan Undergraduates
28	Sri Lanka	(Artigala & Lakshini, 2019)	English Lesson: Learn English in Sinhala		
29	Taiwan	(Wang & Shih, 2015)	Mobile-Assisted Language Learning: Effects on EFL Vocabulary Learning	Experimental Method	93 native speakers of Mandarin Chinese students
30	Taiwan	(Luo et al., 2015)	Using Smartphone to Facilitate English Communication and Willingness to Communicate in a Communicative Language Teaching Classroom	Quasi-experimental design	64 undergraduate students, aged 19-28, one instructor and one assistant
31	Taiwan	(Chen A.-H., 2020)	Investigating the Effects of Blended Learning on EFL Taiwanese College Students	Quantitative Method	100 sophomore students
32	Taiwan	(Godwin-Jones, 2017)	Smartphones and Language Learning	Literature Review	
33	Thailand	(Manowong, 2017)	Incorporating Online Tools to Promote English Reading for EFL Learners: An Action Research Study	Action research	27 tertiary-level students enrolled in 2015 at Maejo University Chiand Mai Campus
34	Thailand	(Anongchanya & Boonmoh, 2015)	The Effectiveness of the Use of Dictionary Applications in Smartphones in Reading an English-Language Passage and Writing a Summary in Thai	Mixed Method	118 students of Santa Cruz Cenvent School who studied in grade 10 in 2013
35	Thailand	(Weerakanto, 2019)	Digital Literacies of English Language Teachers and Students and Their Perceptions of Technology-Enhanced Language Learning and Teaching in Thailand	Mixed Method	University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce 58 teachers and 38 students and 3 focal teachers
36	Thailand	(Howlett, 2019)	How Thai Students Use Mobile Devices When Learning EFL and the Effect of Urban/Rural School Location	Quantitative Method	277 students studying in eight schools in Southern Thailand, which were split into urban and rural sub-groups

no	Country	In text citation	Title	Research design	Participants and sample size
37	Thailand	(Inpin, 2016)	Smartphones: Noteworthy Tools for Enhancing EFL Students English Language Learning	Mixed Method	384 first year students who studied Intensive English course at Mae Fah Luang University in the first semester, academic year 2015
38	Thailand	(Tappoon, 2020)	A Selection of Mobile Applications in Learning English between High and Low Proficient EFL Learners in a Thai Institute	Mixed Method	132 second year students who enrolled in English for communication in the first semester in 2018
39	Thailand	(Lawrence, 2015)	Learner Receptiveness Towards Mobile Technology in a College English Program: The Smart Decision?	Quantitative Method	159 University students

5.2. Number of Studies per Country

The number of studies, as seen in Figure 1, includes nine Asian countries. Among the countries, the largest number of studies of Indonesian participants is i.e., nine. The number of Thai participants is seven, Malaysian participants-five, Bangladeshi, Saudi, and Taiwanese participants- four each, Iranian, Nepalese, and Sri Lankan participants- two each.
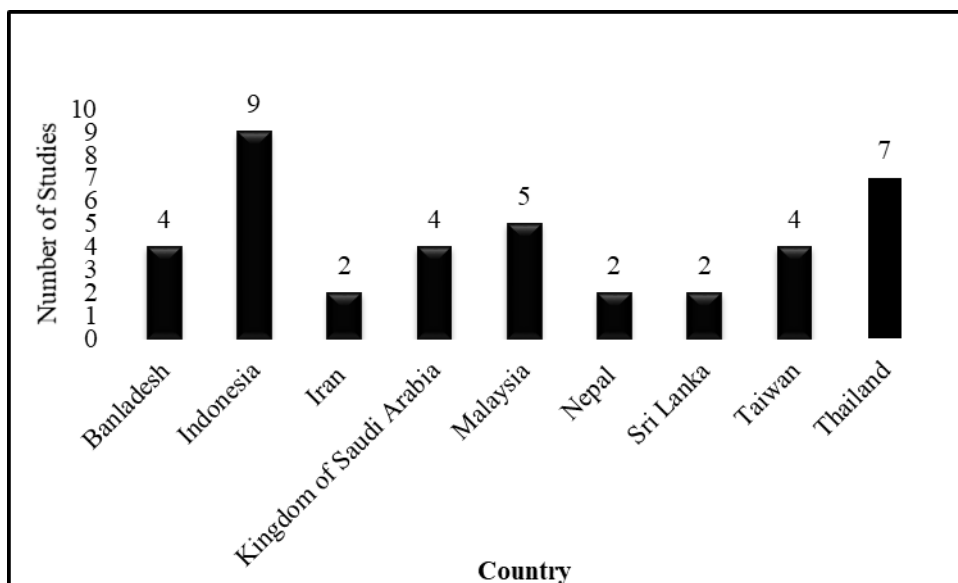
Figure 1: Number of Studies per Country

5.3. Number of Studies by Year of Publication

Figure 2 indicates the number of studies by year of publication. The largest number of studies-11, considered in this study, published in 2019. There are seven in 2018 and 2015, six in 2016, five in 2020, four in 2017.
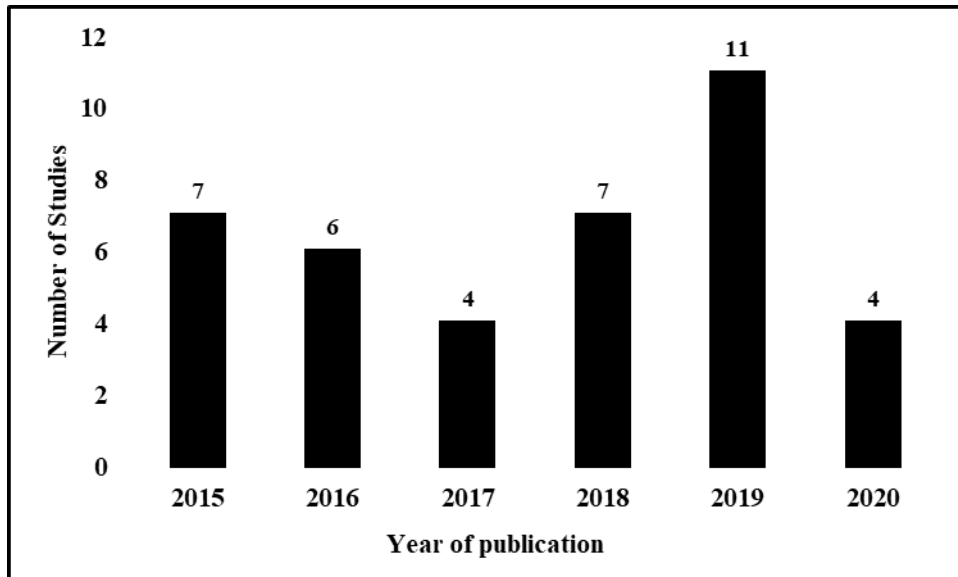

Figure 2: Number of Studies by Year of Publication

5.4. Number of Studies by Types of Research Design

As shown in Figure 3, the studies with the maximum number of research designs – 11 are mixed. The second-largest number – nine is a quantitative method. The studies comprise other research design types such as qualitative method, action research, literature review, quasi-experimental design, experimental method, survey-based research, systematic review, exploratory study, qualitative action research, descriptive survey design, pre-

experimental research, descriptive qualitative design, and explanatory sequential mixed method design.
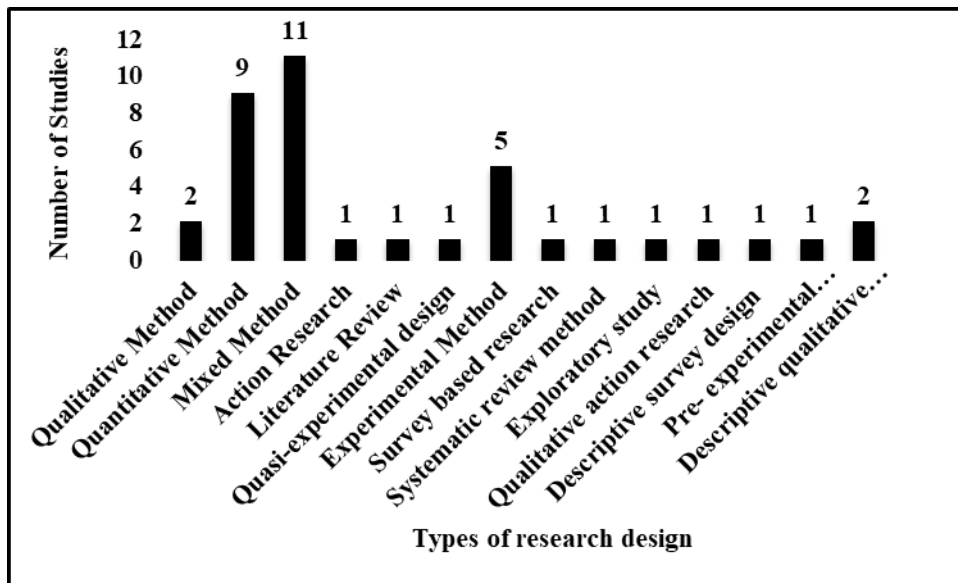
Figure 3: Number of Studies by Types of Research Design

5.5. Number of Studies by Feature of Participants

The participants in the 40 studies chosen for this systematic review are predominantly tertiary-level learners.
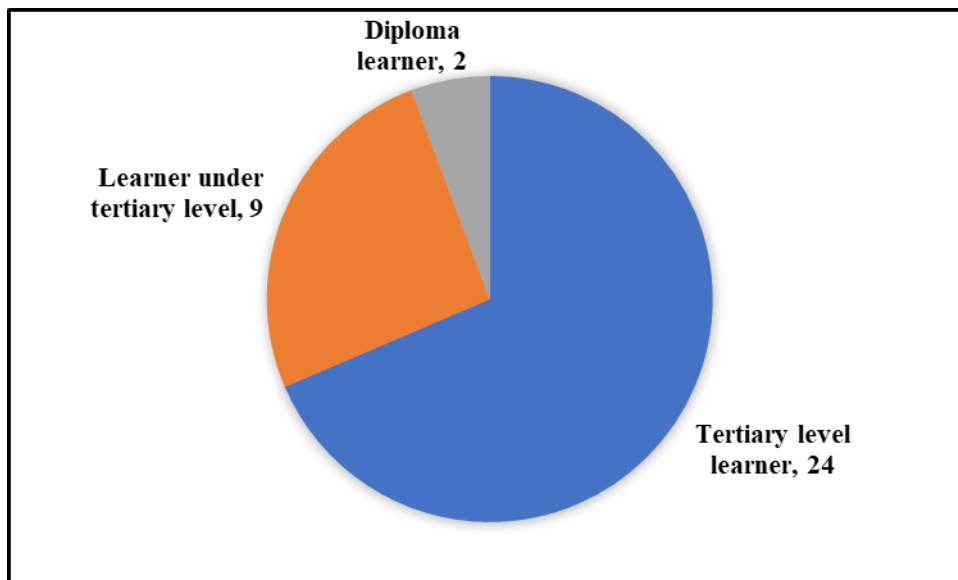

Figure 4: Number of Studies by Feature of Participants

6. Discussion

6.1. Research Question 1: What is the attitude of learners towards the conventional practice of teaching EFL?

In countries where English is not an official language and is taught as a foreign language, learners usually do not need English regularly. Teachers follow the conventional approach to teaching English (Alzubi & Singh, 2017). Traditional classrooms may not meet the requirements of the learners at times. The learners of the EFL in traditional classrooms are less driven. They have minimal exposure to the use of English with decontextualized texts. The duration of the class is limited. Generally, most EFL teachers do not have experience in teaching methodologies. They are used to teacher-centered instruction, where they control everything in the learning process. They promote rote learning. This kind of teaching makes learners more dependent and spoon-fed. Since the teacher takes complete authority, the learners lose their natural interest in reading supplementary texts. The learner-centered approach in the classroom is, therefore, important to integrate. In this context, mobile technology is appropriate to be used to ensure the active participation of learners in the classroom and make the learning environment more enjoyable and motivating. As a consequence, smartphones need to be a part of the educational process (Hazaea & Alzubi, 2016; Alzubi & Singh, 2017; Hazaea, 2018; Alzubi, 2019; Artigala & Lakshini, 2019; Hamim et al., 2019; Singh, 2019; Nami, 2020).

6.2. Research Question 2: What is the actual state of EFL learner's reading abilities?

The reading habit of Asian EFL learners is less and is steadily diminishing. For example, Thai EFL learners lack vocabulary and have low-grade reading skills (Anongchanya & Boonmoh, 2015; Manowong, 2017). Malaysians read an average of one to two pages a year until 1982. The Malaysian National Library survey (2006) shows that Malaysians read up to two books a year in 1996 and stays the same in 2005. Most learners have acknowledged that they have not read a book or a novel per year (cited in Ahmed S., 2016). Ahmed S. (2016) found that learners who read for one or two hours a day read mainly for academic purposes.

Alzubi et al. (2019) observe that Saudi learners have a low level of reading skills. These learners lack exposure, lack training, lack exercise. They have less enthusiasm, insufficient time, and space for reading. Exiguous teaching strategies are being followed where the teacher controls the entire learning process, rote learning activities, and unprofessional learning textbooks. Studies (Ahmed S., 2016; Alam, 2016) have identified some of the factors behind Asian reading disinclination. The critical reasons for this issue are (1) lack of inspirational models in educational institutions, (2) peer pressure, (3) limited availability of reading materials at home and school. Pandian (1999) maintains that the widespread usage of social networking sites, devices such as smartphones, tends to impair reading habits. Learners consider reading on a smartphone just as fun (cited in Ahmed S., 2016).

6.3. Research Question 3: How do learners perceive printed books?

Printed books are not pleasant at times. They are monotonous. Commonly, most of the printed books are black and white. Because of the less color used in printed books, learners find them uninteresting. Some of the pictures are unclear. It is not convenient for learners to carry printed books anywhere at any time because of their awkward size and weight. Printed books require limited space for learning. Learners tend to read EFL textbooks in a variety of places they feel comfortable with. The availability of teachers' time is a matter for schools. Learners have to wait for feedback from the educator because, for obvious reasons, printed books do not offer direct feedback. In addition, the instructions in the EFL reading textbooks are not comprehensible, and the learners face difficulties. Thus, printed books are not helpful for autonomous learning (Muslaini et al., 2018).

6.4. Research Question 4: How do learners spend their time with smartphones?

Using a smartphone for EFL reading at the tertiary level is common in Bangladesh. More than half of tertiary learners employ smartphones, and most of them use smartphone apps. They attest that smartphone apps help improve all language skills. Most learners suggest that teachers encourage EFL learners to use smartphone apps (Hossain, 2018; Rimi, 2019).

Leaners spend a considerable amount of time on smartphones, especially on social networking sites. For instance, Thai and Bangladeshi university students spend 3 hours a day (Rimi, 2019; Tappoon, 2020). The favorite apps used by Indonesian and Thai learners are YouTube, Google Translate, Google Docs, Google classroom, iTunes, Skype, Notability, Keynote, Pages, Foxit PDF, iMovie, TOEIC, Urban dictionary, online dictionaries, Line, and Facebook. These platforms are mainly used for entertainment purposes (Manowong, 2017; Rimi, 2019; Weerakanto, 2019; Dewi et al., 2020; Tappoon, 2020).

Smartphone apps make EFL reading more manageable and better (Hossain, 2018). Tappoon (2020) suggests that academic institutions use learners' habits to teach English because learners are used to exploring the internet and social networking sites. Teachers and institutions can upload video clips and integrate or download videos from YouTube. Social networking sites may be used for scholarly debate. This initiative can improve critical thinking skills and communication skills. (Weerakanto, 2019) argues that social media and technology should be integrated into the English language curricula.

However, there is a substantial gap between urban and rural schools regarding the amount of time spent on smartphones. In Thailand, urban school learners spend more time than rural school learners. Urban learners are familiar with the use of smartphones for academic purposes. They check the meaning of words, look for synonyms and antonyms, take pictures of the English text, translate it to Thai, check spelling mistakes, and check pronunciation. Rural learners seldom use smartphones. They do not know how to use a smartphone for academic purposes (Howlett, 2019).

In comparison to urban learners, rural learners are not authorized to carry smartphones to schools. Some of the reasons behind rural learners' falling behind are

institutional and teacher policies and teachers' negative attitudes towards smartphone use (Howlett, 2019). Saudi learners are also not permitted to use smartphones in schools (Alzubi & Singh, 2017). Singh (2019) has shown in a report that smartphones create a digital divide. Most learners, particularly those from a lower-income family, cannot afford digital devices, internet connectivity.

6.5. Research Question 5: How does a learner benefit from a smartphone in EFL reading?

Learners use smartphone applications to learn vocabulary. They recommend mobile apps because mobile apps break the text-reading code manifested by matching vocabulary with their meanings and categorize by translating the odd word from the list of given words, by adding the opposites of the given words, by categorizing words based on their parts of speech and purpose, and by defining key points, such as grammar, classes, punctuation (Alam, 2016; Bhattarai, 2016; Hazaea & Alzubi, 2016; Cholis et al., 2018; Hazaea, 2018; Hamim et al., 2019); Wisnuwardana, 2019; Abdullah et al, 2020).

In an experimental study in Taiwan (Wang & Shih, 2015), where participants were native speakers of Mandarin Chinese, a set of learners who learned English vocabulary using mobile apps were better off than those who were usually taught with pen and paper. Two sets of learners had the same degree of pre-test efficiency in English. One set, the control group, were taught 2000 words by traditional methods, such as rote learning, pen, and paper, and the other set, the experimental group, used mobile learning apps. After 15 weeks of teaching, the researchers carried out a 50-word post-test. In the post-test, the experimental group had considerably more points than the control group. The experimental group recognized that mobile apps supported them with daily word exposure, numerous attempts, interactive input, and individualized learning to learn more words. The apps delivered word-definition matching exercises featuring multiple attempts along with immediate, engaging feedback involving conscious word manipulation and task-induced interaction to engage learners in contextualized word practice, thus facilitating learning. Such multi-faceted, collaborative, and engagement-rich task manipulation is a crucial feature of mobile applications that can benefit from the ease of repetition and interaction offered.

Learners benefit from reading online news, blogs, and social media. Reading news and online posts improves reading skills and improves vocabulary because it is accessible and affordable. A page of online news includes tags (a selection of news items with the same topic or subject), crosslinks (a collection of similar news items at the bottom of the page), and hyperlinks (a related news item that is put in the keyword in the passage). Learners can build a personal online library using online news more (Hasan et al., 2015; Alam, 2016; Putra & Weny, 2017; Fauzi, 2018; Rimi, 2019; Wisnuwardana, 2019, Abdullah et al., 2020).

The smartphone is easy to use, and through smartphone apps, one can log into a variety of UpToDate information. It is user friendly to the learners. The smartphone is a very effortless, straightforward instrument to search for information and expand new knowledge quickly. It can make learners learn anywhere at any time. Learners use

smartphones to enhance their reading, and writing skills and their speaking and listening skills. They can select their reading materials based on their level of efficiency. They, thus become self-regulated and lifelong learners (Lawrence, 2015; Ramamuruthy & Rao, 2015; Alam, 2016; Inpin, 2016; Cholis et al., 2018; Fauzi, 2018; Mekhzoumi et al., 2018; Wisnuwardana, 2019; Abdullah et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2020). Every learner is different from each other. They do not have the same learning patterns. Smartphone provides every learner with multiple ways of learning to choose (Singh, 2019).

In Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, learners claim that learning English will be useful if they are independent learners and can choose their reading materials correctly. Learners acknowledge that setting their learning objectives and seeking information helps enhance their comprehension and performance in the classroom. Usually, they take pictures of notes, lecture slides and read them repeatedly for better comprehension. They can even have their works evaluated by others with social media like WhatsApp, WeChat, Facebook. Generally, a learner cannot get many classmates to get their work reviewed. They use smartphone applications to correct their errors and ask for help. Learners admit that they are satisfied when they get a solution to an issue, staying up to date with the latest news, getting more details via smartphones, getting the right word at the right time. The learners are moderately pleased with the use of smartphones in the learning process. The learners emphasize that smartphones help figure out what to learn and, most importantly, how to learn. Learners agree that using smartphones to learn English improves their critical thinking, creative thinking, questionability, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork to a certain degree. Specifically, using a smartphone guides them to a self-reliant lifelong learner (Ramamuruthy & Rao, 2015; Alam, 2016; Manowong, 2017; Putra & Weny, 2017; Prasangani, 2019; Singh, 2019; Abdullah et al., 2020).

Learners not only use mobile applications within the classroom but also outside the classroom. It implies that smartphones form a sense of reading. Learners are stress-free while using mobile applications to analyze text. Learners of Bangladesh, Indonesia, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hold that reading digital-texts is inspiring, exciting, and more convenient. So, they do not rely only on prescribed books but also on auxiliary reading materials (Alam, 2016; Hazaea & Alzubi, 2016; Manalu, 2019; Hazaea, 2018; Nami, 2020).

Likewise, both Malaysian and Sri Lankan learners enjoy digital platforms to develop their reading and writing skills. They claim that mobile apps can activate their creativity and make them interested in learning outside the classroom. Traditional forms of reading, such as offline newspapers, magazines, and storybooks, are losing popularity (Mekhzoumi et al., 2018; Prasangani, 2019; Malek et al., 2018).

The majority of Taiwanese and Thai learners believe that introducing smartphones to English learning has a positive impact. Nevertheless, a limited number of high-level and low-level learners see no change after using mobile apps to learn English (Luo et al., 2015; Chen A.-H., 2020; Dewi et al., 2020).

6.6. Research Question 6: What are the issues of learning with smartphones?

Taiwanese undergraduate learners argue that studying with a smartphone, at times, is limited for both teachers and learners to communicate face-to-face. The relationship between teacher and learner has become unfamiliar and lacks warmth (Chen A.-H., 2020). Most mobile apps highlight drill-based rather than communicative tasks. They have a few pedagogical elements. The instructional design of the apps is weak, and often teacher-centered (Godwin-Jones, 2017).

Unreliable Wi-Fi access is one of the leading technical issues. Learners get irritated when interrupted Wi-Fi connectivity blocks mobile use. Sometimes they worry about losing their finished work due to Wi-Fi disconnection, power outages. They are also worried about their rights to the intellectual property since online work can be plagiarized. Learners do not prefer taking exams online (Alam, 2016; Cholis et al., 2018; Malek et al., 2018).

Using a smartphone can lead to various health concerns. The learners' central problem is the discomfort of the eyes caused by the light of the screen. Smartphone, like other gadgets, makes our eyes work harder. Frequent smartphone user learners should obey Rule 20/20/20, i.e., taking a 20-second break every 20 minutes reading by looking at something 20 feet away (Fauzi, 2018; Muslaini et al., 2018). Gheytasi et al. (2015) have found a range of drawbacks to the smartphone. They are an addiction to learner, disruption of study time, cell phone use while in school (including co-partner use), the decline in physical activity, and lack of control for adolescents over information.

6.7. Research Question 7: What are the expectations of EFL learners from their teachers?

A majority of students in Bangladesh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia think that a smartphone cannot substitute a good teacher. They report that they need teachers' guidance to determine what to learn and how to learn. Learners expect their instructor to help them set learning goals, identify errors, open the scope for practicing the language, and tell them the duration to be spent on those activities. They rely on the reinforcement, direction, and expertise of the teachers. They agree that teachers can help them grow as autonomous learners. With the aid of smartphone learning apps, teachers may include students in the academic or classroom decision-making process. It ensures learners' engagement in the classroom and eventually creates a learning-centered environment (Ramamuruthy & Rao, 2015; Alam, 2016; Alzubi & Singh, 2017; Weerakanto, 2019).

Many EFL teachers in the Asian region are still not habituated to using technology in teaching. Younger teachers are more willing and able to use technology in education. Learners from Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, and Thailand have shown in several studies that teachers' ICT integration in the EFL focuses solely on necessary technology, such as Google Search, Email, YouTube, and PowerPoint presentations. Several of the teachers share the slides online. Many teachers typically use the board to write in the classroom. Learners conclude that it is a waste of time when an instructor is not qualified to incorporate technology into instructional tasks, and yet that the teacher is instructed to use technology. Learners have empathy for teachers because most teachers have not grown up with new technology and smartphones. However, teachers need to understand

that they do not have to use technology on a regular basis. They, therefore, have to create an acceptable combination of online and offline academic activities. Teachers require comprehensive training in ICT technology integration. (Hasan et al., 2015; Singh, 2019; Weerakanto, 2019; Dewi et al., 2020).

7. Recommendation and Final Note

Today is the age of digital education. Online learning devices have grown powerfully to support learning languages for learners (Inpin, 2016). UNESCO (2014) describes mobile learning as a learning process both within and outside the classroom. It is not limited to a particular location or time (cited in Bitter, 2016). Smartphones are commonly used devices, and online learning relies mainly on smartphones. Inpin (2016) claims that smartphones have developed a new model for learning English.

A number of studies have shown that English learners as a foreign language in Asian countries are not good at English, particularly in reading skills. The introduction of smartphones to reading may be a better choice for them. Learners generally have an affirmative view of smartphone integration in English language learning. Sukor and Ali (2019) suggest the policymakers ensure quality assurance, identification, and incorporation of various stakeholders, shortening learning events, offering feedback and instruction, determination of learners' context. The researchers conclude with technological suggestions such as controlling interference, addressing hindrance regarding mobile devices and the internet.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. All co-authors have seen and agree with the contents of the manuscript and there are no financial or financially conflicting interests to report. The authors would like to certify that the submission is an original work and is not under review at any other publication.

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