



AN INVESTIGATION INTO LECTURERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE USE OF MOBILE APPLICATIONS IN EFL LESSONS FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJORS

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore English lecturers' perceptions of using mobile applications in teaching non-English majors, focusing on their benefits and associated challenges. Seven lecturers joined a survey and shared their insights towards integrating mobile applications in their teaching. Collected results showed that most of the lecturers have a positive attitude toward the use of mobile applications in their teaching practice, highlighting their potential to enhance students' learning outcomes and engagement in English lessons. Nevertheless, there are some challenges that the lecturers share, such as time constraints, technological limitations, student-related challenges, financial limitations, and pedagogical challenges, which sometimes lead to lecturers' hesitation to integrate mobile applications into their lessons. Thus, implications for educators and policymakers are provided to optimize mobile-assisted teaching strategies.

Keywords: mobile applications, non-English majors, lecturers' perceptions, English teaching

1. Introduction

In the era of technology, smartphones and their applications (apps) are an essential part of our lives. Of all users, the group of 18-24 years-olds accounts for the majority, with 3.2 hours per day on their mobile apps, according to buildfire.com. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that mobile apps are now widely adopted at the tertiary level (Firdaus *et al.*, 2024; Fučeková & Metruk, 2018). Especially, the utilization of mobile applications in EFL

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classes has been one of the most notable changes thanks to its great influence on the development of EFL learning and teaching thanks to its various benefits.

A wide range of advantages have been proven in various studies: suitability to learn different language learning skills, such as grammar (Abdul Ghani *et al.*, 2017), vocabulary (Klimova, 2021; Mukhlif & Challob, 2021; Wu, 2015), reading (Imam & Kabir, 2020), listening, writing (Vurdien, 2017), and speaking (Abugohar *et al.*, 2019; Asratie *et al.*, 2023; Seraj *et al.*, 2020), enhancement to personalized, flexible, and context-aware learning experiences (Burston, 2014; Chopvitayakun *et al.*, 2023; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Palshkov *et al.*, 2024), instant feedback from either teachers or classmates and peer-to-peer collaboration (Firdaus *et al.*, 2024; Garcés Manzanera, 2022; Kaceti & Klímová, 2019; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008), chances to practice the target language anytime and anywhere, offer chance to simultaneously enjoy leisure and acquire knowledge (Hossain, 2018).

Apart from benefits, teachers still face some challenges during their lessons if mobile apps are included, including smaller dimensions of smartphones, Internet availability, the readiness of teachers and learners, unbalanced development of the four language skills, distraction, feedback issues, disproportionateness of level of difficulty within various tasks, or time distribution for tasks Metruk (2022), lack of pedagogical principles of apps (Kabilan *et al.*, 2023), Teachers' readiness to integrate newer mobile technologies into their teaching (MacCallum & Jeffrey, 2009; Shraim & Crompton, 2015), the insufficiency of facilities (especially Internet/wireless connection), training and time constraint (Dewi *et al.*, 2020; Shraim & Crompton, 2015).

In the context of Vietnamese education, a positive attitude from Vietnamese teachers toward the application of mobile apps was proven. However, most of the studies focused on students' perspectives, and little is known about teachers. As a result, this project would love to fill the niche of finding out instructors' perceived benefits and challenges to the application of mobile apps in EFL lessons for non-English majored students.

2. Literature review

2.1 The use of mobile applications in EFL classes in higher education

In the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0, smartphones and their applications (apps) are an inseparable part of our daily lives. As statistical data from buildfire.com, it was illustrated that 90% of mobile time is spent on apps (Lauren, 2023). The most engaging group of people are usually 18-24 year-olds. On average, they spend about 3.2 hours on their mobile apps on a daily basis. As a result, it is not surprising at all that mobile apps are now widely adopted at the tertiary level, where a large body of studies have been conducted all over the world, especially since 2008 (Firdaus *et al.*, 2024; Fučeková & Metruk, 2018).

According to Ahmed's definition, mobile apps are mainly the software developed and used on smartphones (2019), so the use of mobile apps in EFL classes is the

integration of mobile apps into the process of language teaching and learning. This application into EFL lessons has been studied a great deal to examine its effectiveness, benefits, drawbacks, etc., in different contexts.

2.2 The benefits of using mobile apps in EFL classes in higher education

The use of mobile apps for learning English as a foreign language (EFL) has significantly increased over time. The integration of mobile applications into the learning processes has been one of the most notable changes thanks to its great influence on the development of EFL education. They provide a variety of support to facilitate and enhance the performance of EFL students' language (Ahmed *et al.*, 2019; Firdaus *et al.*, 2024; Klimova, 2021). This is also the reason why apps have become popular technological tools and have been welcomed by teachers and students around the world (Abugohar *et al.*, 2019; Andrew *et al.*, 2018; Mindog, 2016).

The first benefit of mobile applications is its portability solution to every learning style which can suit different language learning skill requirements, such as grammar (Abdul Ghani *et al.*, 2017), vocabulary (Klimova, 2021; Mukhlif & Challob, 2021; Wu, 2015), reading (Imam & Kabir, 2020), listening, writing (Vurdien, 2017), and speaking (Abugohar *et al.*, 2019; Asratie *et al.*, 2023; Seraj *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, students can install a wide range of smartphone applications, depending on which aspects they wish to focus on.

It is also shown that mobile applications could enhance language learning by providing a variety of personalized, flexible, and context-aware learning experiences (Burston, 2014; Chopvitayakun *et al.*, 2023; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Palshkov *et al.*, 2024). Besides, a wide range of rapport is provided through instant feedback from either teachers or classmates and peer-to-peer collaboration (Firdaus *et al.*, 2024; Garcés Manzanera, 2022; Kacetyl & Klímová, 2019; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008).

Moreover, other reasons found why students enjoy using mobile apps are the possibility to practice the target language anytime and anywhere, portability, taking tests on different language skills, exchanging learners' proficiency with their peers, access to lessons on their apps on various skills, chance to simultaneously enjoy leisure and acquire knowledge (Hossain, 2018).

One decade ago, Palloff even claimed in his book that this type of learning is the future of learning technology, which has the potential to change the learning and teaching we have known so far (2013).

2.3 The challenges faced by EFL teachers when using mobile applications in higher education

EFL teachers highly value the application of mobile apps in their lessons (Al-Khresheh, 2024; Al-Mubireek, 2020; Dewi *et al.*, 2020) thanks to the benefits they offer. However, they have still faced some challenges.

In the systematic review article of Metruk (2022) about the challenges of using smartphones in EFL lessons, there are four main concerns pointed out from 56 articles

from 2016 up to 2020, including smaller dimensions of smartphones, Internet availability, the readiness of teachers and learners, and unbalanced development of the four language skills. Some minor problems explored included distraction, feedback issues, disproportionateness of difficulty levels within various tasks, or time distribution for tasks.

Another concern is the actual value of learning apps contributing to the language learning process. Although students' engagement and motivation were enhanced in the study of Kabilan and his coworkers (2023), they worried about the lack of pedagogical principles of apps (Kabilan *et al.*, 2023). Although teachers are technologically competent in general, they still may not be fully prepared or able to integrate newer mobile technologies into their teaching (MacCallum & Jeffrey, 2009; Shraim & Crompton, 2015). Along the same line, Kaceti and Klímová emphasized the method and lesson preparation to utilize mobile tools effectively after conducting a thorough examination of published English studies between 2015 and April 2019 to assess the potential benefits and effectiveness of utilizing mobile apps for language learning (2019). Thus, training teachers on how to incorporate mobile apps into content and explore truly innovative uses is needed (Long, 2016; Pegrum *et al.*, 2013; Shraim & Crompton, 2015).

Other drawbacks are also investigated, including the insufficiency of facilities (especially Internet/wireless connection), training, and time constraints, which are major barriers preventing teachers' use of digital apps in their teaching (Dewi *et al.*, 2020; Shraim & Crompton, 2015).

2.4 The use of mobile applications in EFL classes in Viet Nam higher education

In the context of Vietnam, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) issued a directive to boost the use of IT in teaching and training activities since 2013 across aspects, including information management, curriculum at all levels of education, etc. And EFL is not an exception. Fortunately, a positive attitude from Vietnamese teachers was shown in a large-scale report of Vietnam's National Foreign Language Project, with more than 1500 teachers in 14 provinces.

Yen and Cuong (2018) showed that mobile technology allowed the lecturers to be more creative and, therefore, more efficient and effective in teaching language after experimenting with 2 groups of participants using digital devices for their studying. Technology access helped enhance English lesson activities, motivate students, and engage them inside and outside the EFL classroom.

Tra (2020) studied students' attitudes toward the use of mobile devices inside the classroom. With a mixed-method approach, she discovered positive attitudes, and positive beliefs about the usefulness and ease of use of MALL. Besides, the participants also experienced positive feelings of excitement when using mobile devices to learn language inside the classroom.

Vo (2023) explored Vietnamese EFL students' behaviors and acceptance of the use of mobile devices in their English learning process at a university in Vietnam. The data was collected from a survey of 207 EFL students using a questionnaire with 13 English-

Vietnamese statements within 20 minutes. The results were positive, in which the learner supports this virtual learning thanks to mobile gadgets' smart functions offering convenient learning without demanding users' efforts to manipulate.

Nghi and Thang (2024) assessed the impacts of mobile apps on language instruction and advancement in 2 public universities. They conducted pre-tests, post-tests, surveys, and observations to analyze the language learning outcomes founded on mobile app implementation, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods. They found that students' motivation, language acquisition, and increased learner engagement are fostered by incorporating mobile apps with gamification and interactivity features into the language curriculum.

As we can see, in the Vietnamese landscape, most mobile app studies focus on students, and little is done about teachers. Thus, the present project aims to illuminate this gap with the following research questions:

- 1) What benefits do teachers perceive when they apply mobile applications to their EFL lessons for non-English majors?
- 2) What challenges do teachers perceive when they apply mobile applications to their EFL lessons for non-English majors?

3. Methods

To thoroughly explore the perceptions of English lecturers towards using mobile applications in teaching non-English majors, this study employs a qualitative approach. It is believed that a qualitative approach is the most suitable for this study as it lets the researchers capture not only the participants' subjective experiences and attitudes but also their challenges in integrating mobile applications into their teaching. This approach aligns with Creswell's (2013) statement that qualitative research is most effective when exploring complex social phenomena and when the aim is to understand participants' lived experiences deeply.

3.1 Participants

Participants of this study were 7 English lecturers teaching non-English majors at Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies (HUFLIS). The main criteria for choosing participants were their years of teaching experience and their relevant experience and familiarity with mobile applications. By doing so, the researchers hoped to receive rich and meaningful insights for this study. Formal address in Vietnamese ("thầy/cô") was consistently used during the interview to maintain cultural respect and foster open communication. Table 1 summarizes the demographic and professional characteristics of the participants.

Table 1: The demographic and professional characteristics of the participants.

Participant ID	Teaching experience (years)	Familiarity with mobile applications
P1	< 5 years	Intermediate
P2	5-10 years	Intermediate
P3	11-15 years	Intermediate
P4	11-15 years	Intermediate
P5	> 15 years	Beginner
P6	> 15 years	Beginner
P7	> 15 years	Beginner

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study to explore participants' perceptions focusing on the research questions. This method allows the researchers to thoroughly explore:

- 1) Lecturers' perceived benefits of mobile applications in teaching EFL for non-English majors,
- 2) Lecturer's perceived challenges of mobile applications in teaching EFL for non-English majors.

Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese participants' mother tongue language to allow participants to express themselves naturally, which ensured the authenticity and depth of their responses. Participants were invited to participate through email and personal contact. Interviews were then scheduled at a time and medium (Zoom/ Google Meet or face-to-face) convenient for each participant. Each interview lasted approximately 10 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent for subsequent transcription, translation and analysis. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the data systematically.

4. Results and Discussion

All seven teachers said that they sometimes used mobile applications during their EFL lessons. P5 shared that she used mobile apps more often during the COVID-19 pandemic. From their responses, it can be seen that multiple apps were employed during their lessons for different purposes. P1, P2, P3, and P7 shared that Duolingo, Memorise, Quizizz, and Quizlet were utilized for teaching and revising vocabulary. P7 used Kahoot for creating quizzes to review lessons and encourage students' participation, BBC Learning English for high-quality teaching materials, including audio and video for listening practice, especially for level 3/6 exam preparation. P4 utilized ELSA for practicing pronunciation and speaking and Flipgrid for speaking practice. Other apps were also mentioned, including Padlet, Cake, Google Classroom, and Spotify.

4.1. Teachers' perceived benefits of using mobile applications in teaching non-English majors

The most significant advantage that mobile apps offer is **motivation**. All of the participants shared that mobile apps could make their lessons more interesting. Thus, their class atmosphere became more relaxed and less formal. P3 happily told the story of her class:

"The atmosphere of my class changed remarkably thanks to the apps. For example, when it came to Quizizz, students were pushed by the ranking chart, which constantly changed by the number of correct answers and the consuming time. The class was sometimes full of their whispers. But of course, they were satisfying sounds since I knew that they were really working on the task."

P6 even made a comparison with traditional classes and pointed out that *"these app activities make her lessons less intimidating and more enjoyable"*. As a result, students are motivated to participate in the lessons more actively.

Besides, both P1 and P6 appreciated the **flexibility** that mobile apps had offered to their teaching and students' learning. Since the apps are compatible with cell phones, teachers and students are capable of conducting their tasks on their phones as long as a wireless Internet connection is available for them. That is to say, teaching and learning are no longer blocked in the physical classrooms with books, notes, pens, etc. Thanks to mobile apps, teachers can assign tasks and students do their tasks on the phones at any time and place. P6 humorously gave some examples of waiting for food, being in the toilet, cooking, etc. This, to some certain extent, helps her daughter kill boring time, she added. Consequently, the provision of **instant feedback** enables students' learning not to be interrupted, P1 said. She explained that:

"Students often skip reviewing their tasks thoroughly because they tend to get answers/feedback quite a long time after students submit their exercises/assignments. It is understandable that owing to the big workload, it takes teachers a period of time to provide answers/feedback to their students. In this case, mobile apps can solve the problems with simple tasks."

Diverse resources are another remarkable benefit. P3 saw this feature of mobile apps as a motivator to her students, she said:

"Apps nowadays are full of catchy visual and interesting content, which may be collected from various real-life situations and contexts, and can keep students focused on their learning on apps". P6 regarded apps as a source of teaching materials she could make use of for her lessons. She shared: "I normally search for videos, quizzes, and interactive exercises from BBC Learning English."

Moreover, apps are extremely diverse in terms of quantity and content these days. **Continuous learning** happens easily, regardless of teachers' instructions. P6 emphasized the role of mobile apps for **autonomous learning**. P3 said:

"My classes are mixed-leveled as the classification of non-English-majored students' English proficiency does not work effectively. Some students were much better at English than others in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening,.... Of course, I still needed to follow the curriculum. I think this is a common problem in EFL classes, especially in big-size ones. To shorten the gap between them, I guided them to some apps that they could download and learn more about after class time, such as Duolingo. These apps are extremely helpful for those students who are disciplined and autonomous."

In the same line with P3, P6 added that students can control their progress more since many apps adapt to **individual learning** to fit in with students' learning levels and speed. P4 also recommended the utilization of apps in EFL lessons because it can reduce in-class time. She meant that some tasks could be assigned before and after the lessons, so the learning process during the lessons could become more effective and meaningful. This way of teaching is also highly recommended, as stated in Hoi and Mu's project, considering the role of teachers as *"guide on the side"* rather than *"sage on the stage"* to encourage students to adopt mobile-assisted language learning (2021).

One of the reasons P2 highly suggested her students use apps is the **ease to use**. She said: Her students are university students who are very high-tech, and apps are now user-friendly. The annoying point about phones is that it is impossible to forbid them from using them, even during lessons. Thus, she suggested, *"why don't we-teachers turn their habit of using phones into a learning chance?"*.

To conclude, mobile apps' key benefits that lecturers revealed in this project consist of motivating students, ubiquity, providing instant feedback, offering diverse teaching resources, boosting autonomous learning, individual learning, saving time, and being user-friendly. These findings are parallel with rare earlier studies about instructors' perspectives on the use of mobile applications in EFL lessons. Dağdeler and Demiröz (2022), as shown in the literature. They even emphasized mobile apps as a must in EFL lessons (2022).

4.2. The challenges teachers faced when integrating mobile applications into their lessons

"Have you faced any difficulties when applying mobile applications to your English lessons to non-English majors?"

This question was addressed to the participants to see whether they have faced any obstacles when integrating mobile applications into their English lessons. Overall, the challenges that these lecturers mentioned can be classified into 5 main categories

namely time constraints, technological limitations, student-related challenges, financial limitations and pedagogical challenges.

One of the challenges that most teachers mentioned is **time constraints**, which include limited time due to a heavy syllabus, time needed to guide, support, and give feedback to students after the activities, and time required to design app-integrated lesson plans. While P1, P3, and P6 were mostly concerned about the time it takes to implement mobile applications into their lessons, others cared most about the time needed to prepare for the lessons, which may be time-consuming as they need to change some of the activities and think of the best way to make the most out of their mobile applications use. P3 shared: *"It requires significant time for initial guidance, ongoing support, and feedback."* This is in line with Tangirbergen's findings in his similar research in the context of Kazakhstan, which support the view that teachers sometimes have to spend a lot of time instructing the learners on how to use the application correctly, which is a huge challenge for teachers (Tangirbergen, 2022). P5 even compared the time it takes to prepare her lesson plans in traditional lessons versus in lessons with app-integrated activities. She said: *"It takes me more time to prepare lesson plans than usual if I intend to use any apps."* Several previous studies in other contexts also shared the same finding that time constraints are major challenges that make teachers unwilling to try digital apps in their lessons (Dewi *et al.*, 2020; Shraim & Cromton, 2015).

Besides, it is believed that in the context of Vietnamese classrooms, **technological limitations** have been seen as the second biggest concern when a teacher considers implementing mobile applications into his/her lessons. Barriers created by technology come not only from the students but also from the university's facilities. While P5 made a general claim when it comes to the challenges she has faced when utilizing mobile applications in her own English class: *"Technological problems are also a big disadvantage."* P1, P4, and P6 focused on students' own difficulties with their mobile devices, mentioning the fact that some students may not afford a device that can run the applications needed for the lesson. What is more, some students may own a phone that is not compatible with the applications teachers use in class, which may cause some trouble during the lesson. This finding aligns with previous studies, which state some families cannot afford to buy mobile phones for their children, or some can, but the phones are out-of-date, which can lead to some issues during the lessons (Onyema, 2019). Apart from the students' lack of mobile devices, an Internet connection is also of concern, as 3 out of 7 participants mentioned that in their answers. P3 said: *"There are some obstacles due to the poor or unstable internet connections, including unreliable school Wi-Fi and lack of 4G among students. Besides, some students' devices may have unknown problems during the activities"*. P6 emphasized the need for a reliable Internet connection, which is crucial for the use of some apps. She said: *"Poor or unstable internet access can hinder the use of apps that require a continuous connection."* This seems to be a shared problem among countries that lack funds to acquire certain Internet packages (Basar *et al.*, 2021; Dewi *et al.*, 2020; Onyema, 2019; Shraim & Crompton, 2015).

Some **student-related challenges**, including students' digital literacy, their willingness to participate in class activities, distractions from other applications on their devices, and large class sizes, are also found to hinder the effectiveness of mobile application implementation in teaching non-English majors.

A significant issue is **students' limitations in digital literacy**. As P2 and P6 noted, some students may lack the digital literacy needed to operate mobile applications effectively. This is shown through the fact that *"Some students may not know how to use the applications in the right way"*, P2 shared. This is in line with Tangirbergen's study, which indicates that in some situations, teachers have to spend time instructing learners how to use some mobile applications, which can take a lot of class time (Tangirbergen, 2022).

Another challenge is **students' lack of willingness** to participate in mobile-assisted activities. P3 and 6 expressed their concerns about the fact that some students perceive mobile applications as non-serious or are not interested in engaging with them. They said:

"Some students are not interested or cooperative in using mobile applications." (P3)

"Others may view mobile learning tools as non-serious or distracting, prioritizing social media or games instead of educational content." (P6)

Distractions from non-educational apps or notifications are another barrier. P1 emphasized that students are often distracted by non-educational apps or notifications on mobile devices. This is because of the fact that mobile phones are multifunctional devices which have both educational and non-educational applications blurring the lines between learning and leisure. P6 mentioned that social media platforms and games also attract students' attention, distracting them from learning applications. The danger of students being distracted while using mobile applications to learn foreign languages in classrooms was noted by Pham *et al.* (2022). Various researchers shared the same viewpoint, mentioning the fact that it is easy for learners to be distracted and may be involved in non-educational activities while using mobile devices (Pham, 2020, Mingyong, 2015; Vinikas, 2021; McPheat, 2021).

One more student-related problem that complicates the use of mobile applications is **managing large-size classes**. P4 noted that in large classes, it is difficult for her to keep track of students' engagement and progress during the lessons. She said: *"For some applications, I am unable to manage student engagement and track their progress, especially in large classes of non-English majors."*

Findings from the interview also highlight **financial limitations** as a problem as not many mobile applications are free and Vietnamese teachers and students usually do not have their budget for premium accounts for these apps. Participants 3 and 6 shared the same idea that most mobile applications only offer limited features or usage time for free versions. If teachers want premium features or subscriptions, it would be unaffordable for them. This issue is particularly relevant in the context of Vietnam, where

many higher education institutions lack the necessary infrastructure or funding to support this form of learning (Linh & Vu, 2021).

Finally, **pedagogical challenges** are also a matter of concern as teachers have to change their pedagogy to implement mobile applications into their lessons. P4 and P7 expressed their concerns about the difficulty in managing their students' engagement in mobile-assisted activities. They worried that they could not ensure all students participate in these activities effectively. Participant 6 noted that in order to integrate mobile applications into her lesson, tasks like researching, testing, and adapting content would require extra time. She said: *"Preparing lessons that integrate mobile apps requires extra time for researching, testing, and adapting content."* This issue is consistent with previous studies, which show that the lack of training and expertise among EFL teachers when it comes to applying mobile devices and language learning applications can also challenge them (Chen & Hsu, 2020; Domingo & Garganté, 2016, Kacetl & Klímová, 2019; MacCallum & Jeffrey, 2009; Shraim & Crompton, 2015).

4.3. The improvements or features teachers would like to see in mobile applications for EFL lessons

Along with the challenges teachers listed above, some improvements were suggested as followings:

A. For app developers/company

Internet connection is a prerequisite for teachers to employ mobile apps in their lessons. However, the wifi availability is often unstable in their schools; therefore, P1, P2, P5, and P6 suggested that developers should create apps which can operate without an Internet connection in the future. This issue was also mentioned by Reidesel and Charles (2018), admitting that most learning apps, for example, Duolingo, Brainscape, Anki, require an active network connection. Luckily, with smart devices, self-contained mobile apps include all of the educational content and the software needed to adaptively schedule spaced practice completely independent of a central computational service. This lets learners make optimal use of their time in learning the material with the apps.

In addition, more **tracking features** should also be included in the apps, as P6 suggested developing *"Comprehensive tools for tracking student progress over time, such as detailed analytics on strengths and weaknesses and compatibility with traditional grading systems"*. P2 also suggested that a virtual classroom can be created in the platform of the app so that more interaction among students can take place. P3 posited that the integration of other functionalities aimed at facilitating peer-to-peer interaction, including collaborative activities, joint projects, or discourse platforms, is essential for the enhancement of collaborative learning among students. Actually, various apps now offer these functions, such as Padlet. Maybe the apps they are using lack these functions, thus, more apps should be introduced to them through workshops, or training classes, etc. This is also one of Long's suggestions (2016) to upgrade their technological competence. Besides, he highly recommended teachers join communities/ groups to update their

knowledge by doing research and applying their research results to their teaching job. Moreover, pedagogical training to utilize apps in language lessons is also needed.

Not less important, it is the **financial issue**. All participants are using the free version of the apps due to financial limitations, so they hope there is some financial support from the companies, especially in the field of education.

B. For Schools

To cope with the biggest problems mentioned in the part of challenges, the initial improvement for the schools is the **stable Internet connection** as found in previous studies (Dewi *et al.*, 2020; Shraim & Crompton, 2015). P7 explained that with reliable wifi, her lesson could take place smoothly without any claims from students' loss of access to the apps; which means that more time could be allocated for other activities.

Another suggestion is **financial support** or app purchases for all university teachers. P1 said: her school already had Gmail. Either of them can also be a way to urge the school teachers to apply more technology to their lessons, as MOE's calls to adopt technology into teaching and learning.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, this study qualitatively examined EFL teachers' perceptions of mobile applications in language learning in the context of Vietnam. The perceived benefits and challenges of using mobile applications in English classrooms are also analyzed.

All of the interviewed teachers share their experiences related to using mobile applications in their own language classrooms, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The teachers have used mobile apps for various purposes in their classes, including teaching new lessons, encouraging students' participation, reviewing previous lessons, practicing different language skills, and even preparing for their exams.

The findings show their positive attitudes towards the implementation of mobile applications in their EFL classrooms, and several benefits of this practice are mentioned. First of all, learners' motivation is enhanced as mobile-assisted activities are normally more engaging with a less formal atmosphere. Apps like Quizziz provide interactive elements such as real-time rankings, encouraging students to pay more attention to the tasks. Secondly, with their shared characteristic of being flexible, mobile apps allow teaching and learning anytime and anywhere, which promotes continuous learning. Moreover, some mobile apps offer diverse quantities and content, enabling autonomous learning and helping with mixed proficiency levels. Lastly, lots of apps are now user-friendly, which aligns with students' tech-savviness, turning phone use into a learning opportunity.

However, the implementation of mobile apps into English lessons for non-English majors is not without its challenges. Five main challenges teachers may face include time constraints, technological limitations, student-related issues, financial barriers, and pedagogical challenges. Time constraints involve the extra amount of time needed to plan

the lessons, guide, support, and give feedback to students. Technological issues include outdated or not compatible devices, poor Internet connection, and inadequate institutional facilities. Student-related issues are students' low digital literacy, lack of motivation, distractions from non-educational apps, and teachers' difficulties in managing large classes. Financial constraints stem from the fact that teachers may lack the funds for apps' premium features. Lastly, pedagogical challenges arise from teachers' need for appropriate training to help with the adaptation of teaching strategies when it comes to mobile-assisted activities.

The results of the study suggest the implementation of mobile applications in EFL classrooms. However, in order to ensure the success of such practice, certain measures should be taken by the teachers as well as the policy-makers. It is suggested that teachers design more engaging content to maintain students' focus during mobile-assisted activities. Besides, further research related to mobile applications should be done to explore app-locking features designed to limit distractions during these sessions and to find the right monitoring tools to address the complexities of managing class sizes. It is also essential to equip teachers and students with adequate digital literacy. By participating in some workshops or seminars of this kind, teachers and students will have the chance to reflect on their current use of mobile apps and learn how to use mobile applications effectively. This will ensure that the educational apps they are implementing are used to their fullest potential. Last but not least, encouraging partnerships between educational institutions and technology providers is also crucial. By collaborating with app developers, schools and universities may get access to premium features of some apps at reduced costs, which could make it possible for teachers and learners to afford necessary advanced functions that otherwise may be missed due to their financial limitations.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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