# The Design of a Mobile App for Improving English Macro Skills in BA Courses at CIEX

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### ABSTRACT

Mobile apps are used by people to facilitate different processes. These apps allow users to take advantage of their mobile devices, that is a reason why apps have an impact on every field. Thus, teachers and students could improve the way they learn English by implementing an app for improving not only the English macro skills but also the use of technology inside the classes.

The research approach selected was the qualitative approach. It was chosen for gathering and analyzing the experiences, opinions, and suggestions given by the participants. Also, the action research method was chosen because it is focused not only on analyzing a situation but also on taking action in order to solve it.

The findings gathered after the analysis of the data collected show that a mobile app may be beneficial for students to practice, improve, and develop their English skills anywhere and anytime.

Therefore, the importance of the results lies in the innovation of English learning in a BA course. Also, these results establish the basis for the implementation of a future mobile app that fulfills the necessities of other courses and English levels.

### **KEYWORDS**

English, Technology, English skills, Mobile app

### RESUMEN

Las aplicaciones móviles son utilizadas por las personas para facilitar diferentes procesos. Estas aplicaciones permiten a los usuarios aprovechar al máximo sus dispositivos móviles, y esa es una razón por la cual las aplicaciones tienen un impacto en todos los campos. Por lo tanto, los profesores y estudiantes podrían mejorar la forma en que aprenden inglés mediante la implementación de una aplicación para mejorar no solo las macro habilidades del inglés, sino también el uso de la tecnología dentro de las clases.

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El enfoque de investigación seleccionado fue el enfoque cualitativo. Se eligió para recopilar y analizar las experiencias, opiniones y sugerencias dadas por los participantes. Además, se eligió el método de investigación-acción porque se enfoca no solo en analizar una situación, sino también en tomar acciones para resolverla.

Los hallazgos obtenidos tras el análisis de los datos recopilados muestran que una aplicación móvil podría ser beneficiosa para que los estudiantes practiquen, mejoren y desarrollen sus habilidades en inglés en cualquier lugar y en cualquier momento.

Por lo tanto, la importancia de los resultados radica en la innovación del aprendizaje del inglés en un curso de licenciatura, además, estos resultados establecen las bases para la implementación de una futura aplicación móvil que satisfaga las necesidades de otros cursos y niveles de inglés.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Inglés, Tecnología, Habilidades del inglés, Aplicación móvil

### Introduction

In today's digital age, technology has become an essential part of daily life, experiencing a significant boom in its use across various fields, including communication, entertainment, exercise, and even cooking. Since the COVID-19 Pandemic, technological tools and resources have expanded their reach, particularly in education, where they hold tremendous potential to enhance traditional English learning methods.

Technology is part of the CIEX BA courses. Teachers and students use several technological tools. Computers, TVs, speakers, and even cell phones are used, but some of the resources used, such as websites or mobile apps, are not aligned with the students' needs, context, or level. Therefore, the implementation of a mobile app that fulfills those aspects could be a great opportunity not only for improving the use of technology in CIEX BA courses but also for increasing the students' English learning.

Accordingly, with what was mentioned before, this research aims to improve the use of technology inside and outside CIEX BA courses by designing a mobile app that solves the mismatching of other technological resources with CIEX BA content and purpose. Therefore, research questions were proposed to conduct this research; these questions aim to direct the research to reach the research objective, the questions are the following:

- MRQ: What are the advantages of using a mobile app as a technological resource for improving English skills in BA courses at CIEX?
- SRQ1: How could a mobile app facilitate improving English skills in BA courses at CIEX? SRQ2: How would a mobile app improve the common Learning and Knowledge Technologies (LKT) inside an English BA course at CIEX?
- SRQ3: What are the best mobile app activity types for improving English skills in a class?
- SRQ4: What is the impact of using a mobile app on BA students to improve their English skills?

Overall, the research questions are based not only on app designing but also on activities designing which fit with CIEX BA courses and help teachers and students during their English

Language Learning hand-to-hand with an efficient technological tool.

### **Literature Review**

### Technology in English Language Teaching

Technology is taking an important role in our life. People use technology because of its effectiveness, and in the language learning branch, it provides new ways for practicing the language. People can learn with activities adjusted to their needs. When using technology, teachers tend to look forward to and try to use the newest technology in their classes because if they can use different technological devices, they can also boost language learning.

The mobile learning theory was conducted by diverse authors, but it is mainly credited to Mike Sharples, Josie Taylor, and Giasemi Vavoula. When teachers and students started to use mobile devices as tablets or smartphones, this theory had to be developed to take advantage of those devices for learning purposes. Mohtar et al. (2022) say that the main characteristics of the mobile learning theory are ubiquity, portability, blended learning environments, interactivity, participation, and accessibility. These characteristics are important because they foster students' learning.

Mobile learning, also known as m-learning, has emerged as a powerful tool for language learning, particularly in English education. Mobile learning refers to using mobile devices, such as cell phones, tablets, and technological devices, that can be taken everywhere. On these devices, several apps provide the necessary tools to take advantage of the device's technology to learn something.

There are different kinds of apps for learning English that facilitate the production of all the language skills. Mobile learning offers several amenities that enhance English language learning.

One of the amenities that apps offer for learning is interactive and engaging content. According to Smith (2019), interactive learning materials stimulate students' participation and motivate them to engage with the language actively. Apps like Duolingo<sup>®</sup> and Memrise<sup>®</sup> provide gamified lessons, quizzes, and challenges, making learning English fun and enjoyable (Jones, 2020).

Another significant amenity provided by English learning apps is instant feedback and correction. Students receive immediate feedback on their pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary use, helping them identify and rectify errors in real-time. Research by Chen (2022) indicates that this instant feedback feature in apps improves learners' accuracy and fluency.

Apps for learning language purposes have transformed the English learning process by offering various facilities to enhance the learning experience. These apps fulfill the English language learners ' needs through interactive content, personalized learning paths, instant feedback, audio and video resources, and social interaction. By taking advantage of the benefits of technology, students can develop their language skills effectively and conveniently.

Mobile learning allows students to access English language learning materials anytime and anywhere. As Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler (2007) highlight, mobile devices enable learners to engage in learning activities regardless of time and place. Students can access various English language resources from smartphones or tablets, including interactive apps, online courses, and language learning platforms.

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One of the most important advantages of mobile learning for English learning is personalizing the learning process by considering the students' needs. Sharples et al. (2007) emphasize that mobile devices can offer adaptive learning sessions, tailoring content and activities to the learner's proficiency level, interests, and learning style. Learners can choose from different English language learning apps and platforms that give them personalized exercises, feedback, and progress, providing a more effective and engaging learning process.

Mobile learning provides many amenities that enhance effective English language learning. The accessibility and facility of using mobile devices to foster students' English language learning with engaged activities is a powerful advantage of mobile learning. Also, personalizing the activities to fulfill the students' needs is another important amenity of using mobile learning. Teachers can access multimedia resources, such as videos, pictures, or audio, to improve students' English learning. Thus, mobile technology might be a significant tool for teachers and students because of its amenities and continuous development.

If teachers want to enhance the student's English learning, they have to consider the four English macro-skills: Listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Therefore, the activities should also be based on improving those skills. For the listening activities, the best activity types are to listen to short dialogues and answer questions. For speaking, role-playing could be a great option to foster students' speaking. Writing is completely important, so vocabulary-building and sentence-building activities are the best options. Finally, reading challenges and quizzes might develop the student's reading comprehension. Sharma (2021) implies that using technology, such as an app, can improve the four English macro-skills by taking advantage of the technological devices we are surrounded by.

### **Research Methodology**

For achieving the purpose of this research, the Qualitative Approach was the best option because it is not focused on numerical data, it is focused on the quality of the treatment by analyzing the participants' opinions and experiences. The Action-Research Method was chosen for this research because it is aimed at searching but also on taking actions to solve a problem. Thus, this method focuses on the theory hand to hand in the practice.

This study takes place in the CIEX BA courses. CIEX is a private school that offers language courses but also a Bachelor of Arts in English Letters (BA) and a master's program. For this research, a group of the BA from weekdays was chosen. These students are at a basic English level. As mentioned before, the participants are from the first year of the BA CIEX program. They take classes from Monday to Friday. Also, the teacher in charge of that group is involved in this research.

In order to collect data, the techniques are the following: Interviews, Questionnaires, Observations, and Narrative. These techniques were helpful at the moment of gathering the participants' opinions, experiences, and suggestions. As a result, some instruments were designed to fulfill the research's needs. About the interviews four interviews were used. Half of them were applied for the teacher, one before and the other after the treatment. The reset was applied for the students following the same process. The observations and narrative were designed to gather information at the moment of the implementation of the mobile app inside the classroom. Lastly, even when questionnaires could be considered a quantitative instrument, two questionnaires were applied to evaluate the proposed mobile app, and the data was analyzed qualitatively.

### **Main Findings**

### Advantages Found of Using this Mobile App for English Learning

The mobile app has strong advantages because teachers and students use it to reinforce the content studied inside the classroom. The activities are important because, in students' opinions, they were beneficial for them to practice and review different topics related to their English level without needing a teacher's assistance or an internet connection.

According to Traxler (2009), the mobile learning theory fosters the use of mobile devices to support students' learning by providing engaging activities that students can answer anytime and anywhere. Thus, the participant noticed that the app is not reserved for using inside the classroom; it can also be a great tool to improve their English skills and practice topics related to their English level outside the classroom.

### The Usefulness of this Mobile App for Learning English

The mobile app facilitated the students' English learning because the activities were created based on their English level and contents. The students could practice and interact with the language while they were at school and use the app anywhere in their free time. This facilitated them to review and reinforce topics, vocabulary, and units they studied in their English classes. Thus, the app boosted the students' English skills with engaging activities with which they enhanced their performances in the four macro-skills.

Jones (2020) claims that apps with gamified lessons, entertaining exercises, and activities that test the student's knowledge can make learning English funnier, easier, and more enjoyable. Therefore, the mobile app facilitated students' English learning by providing simple, funny, and enriched activities to review and practice different English skills.

### Improvement of the Use of Technology for Learning due to this Mobile App

The app was innovative for teachers and students because it improved how they took classes and learned English. There is a huge interest in further implementing the app in more classes or subjects because it might significantly enhance students' learning by making the lessons and content funnier and more attractive. Furthermore, teachers and students would have an additional tool for boosting their English skills.

According to Sharples et al. (2007), using a mobile device for learning can offer personalized and interesting activities tailoring the students' proficiency level, likes, and learning styles. Thus, implementing a mobile app is beneficial for students because they have a personalized tool for practicing and improving, but also for taking advantage of the technology and making the learning process more interesting by fostering the use of their cell phones to improve their English skills.

### Types of Activities for English Learning Using this App

The activities implemented for each skill in the mobile app were highly willing by the students and teacher because the activities reached the goal of improving the students' English skills; furthermore, the activities were graded as funny, engaging, entertaining, and innovative. Therefore, the teachers' and students' opinions confirm that activities are important for a mobile

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app to be successful, such as games, quizzes, and activities where students practice their English skills are the best activities.

Thornbury (2006) states that for activities to be effective, they have to be designed tailoring the students' needs and real-life situations because the activities should enhance the students' improvement and learning and show how they will use the language. To sum up, the activities aim to foster students' English skills development by practicing, reviewing, and providing different activities aimed at enhancing their use of the language not only inside the classes but outside them.

### The Impact of Using This Mobile App for Learning English

The feedback given by the participants underscores the app's success in providing a valuable tool for enhancing language proficiency. Overall, the students' comments reflect a favorable assessment of the app's ability to make learning English enjoyable and effective. The teacher's feedback also indicates that the app was a valuable tool in enhancing students' English proficiency in an enjoyable and integrated manner.

According to Sharma (2021), implementing new technological resources, such as a mobile app for learning purposes, fosters the students' practice of English macro skills because it takes advantage of a technological resource everyone has: the cellphone. A mobile app may impact traditional learning practices because of its flexibility and accessibility.

### Main Limitations of the Study

The applicability of this research's conclusions and suggestions is influenced by several geographical, institutional, and knowledge-related limitations. Geographically, the research was carried out in a specific region where the use of Android devices predominates. However, the app's dependence on the Java programming language and its restriction to the Android operating system limited its usability for iOS users. This excluded a portion of students and teachers from fully participating in and benefiting from the app, reducing its broader applicability.

Institutionally, the research was conducted within the context of CIEX, where the activities were aligned with Conversational English Books I and 2. While this ensured relevance to the institution's curriculum, it limited the flexibility of the app's design and the types of activities included. These constraints mean that the app and its activities may not be directly transferable to institutions with different curricula, teaching methodologies, or technological environments.

In terms of the knowledge area, the development process highlighted a gap in technical skills among the English language teachers involved. This dependency on a single teacher-programmer created delays and restricted the app's potential. Additionally, the lack of gamification elements and advanced technological features, such as artificial intelligence or virtual reality, limited the app's appeal and effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and learning.

Overall, while the research provides valuable insights, its findings and recommendations should be contextualized to consider the specific geographical, institutional, and technical constraints under which it was conducted.

### Main Applications and Impact of the Research

The importance of the results gathered by this research lies in how a mobile app improves the English skills of BA students at CIEX. Implementing an app for learning in the BA program is a great opportunity for teachers and students to get in touch with new technology and facilitate the learning process with an engaging tool to fulfill the students' needs. Teachers and students must move on to the new trends and technology for a better education. Technology has given us the opportunity to develop more and better learning materials. Thus, apps have to be implemented in order to provide engagement and innovative tools for language learning.

### Conclusions

Using a mobile app has many advantages in improving English skills, such as the flexibility and accessibility of a mobile app. Users can access the content anywhere and anytime, so it is not just for in-class use.

Having a personalized technological tool for students to learn is a pivotal advantage because other mobile apps provide user activities to improve their English. Nevertheless, sometimes the activities are not based on the students' English level or context. Thus, this mobile app is designed based on the student's context, English level, topics, and textbooks.

Practicing, reviewing, and reinforcing the language with an app is beneficial for students because the learning process is boosted by the technological resources an app can incorporate, such as audios, videos, pictures, games, etc.; those resources facilitate students' practice and carrying out their English learning.

The participants were well-willed to add an extra technological tool for language learning; the mobile app allows students to use their mobile devices to enhance their English skills and access a useful tool designed for them.

The activities implemented in the mobile app were enjoyable and engaging for students because of the variety of activities for each English macro-skill. Also, the activities in the mobile app were designed to consider the students' opinions, suggestions, and experiences with mobile apps for learning English. As a result, the activities were considered useful and attractive for students.

A mobile app for learning purposes has a strong theoretical framework. Different research works about technology, and apps state the advantages of mobile apps for language learning and the mobile learning theory or the learning and knowledge technologies.

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- c) **Research method:** In this part, the author mentions and justifies the research approach and method that were selected, briefly describes the subjects, the context, and the research procedures, as well as the instruments that were used for the data collection.
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- e) Conclusion: This section presents the main conclusions, the importance of the findings, considering the contribution to the theory, the research area, or professional practice, and suggesting practical uses of the results, as well as possible applications for further research.

### 3. Body of the article:

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- **b)** Introduction: It presents the research topic area, and the research topic, mentioning if it is descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, correlational, interpretative, etc. Also, it emphasizes the research problem.
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  - Describe the **data type** (describe and justify the data base, universe, or sample, etc.)
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- g) Conclusions. Describe the main conclusions generated from the answers to the research questions.
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Topics of the articles should be recent and relevant for the academic community and should address one of the following research lines.

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### Length of the articles:

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