

Comparative Analysis of English Vocabulary Learning Apps——taking “Bubeidanci” and “Shaguayingyu” as example

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Abstract:

English is a main bridge of international communication, and there is an increasing need for people to learn English. The popularity of electronic devices expands ways of English learning, leading great popularity of mobile learning tools. The research plans to deeply analyze two vocabulary learning apps— “Bubeidanci” (Effortless Vocab) and “Shaguayingyu” (Easy English) popular on the market so as to explore their performance in these four aspects—the abundance of resources, the mechanism of learning and reviewing, convenience of operation, and the fun of learning. The research aims at offering scientific suggestions for English learners, that is, to help them choose suitable learning tools based on their learning habits and needs.

Keywords: mobile vocabulary learning, college English, Bubeidanci, Shaguayingyu

1. Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition plays a vital role in the process of grasping English well as a foreign language. It is noticed that some learners may encounter obstacles during the learning process. Those obstacles could be shown in various aspects such as the mechanism of memorizing words, confusing words, and time management. Nowadays, carrying a traditional dictionary may not be practical. Traditional teaching syllabus may not fully emphasize vocabulary teaching, leading students reluctant to spend time on dictionaries.

Due to the popularity of the Internet and electronic devices, an increasing number of English majors ac-

cept newly-emerged mobile learning, but they may face some difficulties during the use. Some irrelevant contents such as social media and game can distract students, leading low learning efficiency. Therefore, it is of great importance to know about students' attitude towards vocabulary learning apps, the preferences, and the troubles they encounter when using apps to learn vocabulary.

The paper will conduct an in-depth analysis of the similarities and differences between two well-known English vocabulary learning software, “Bubeidanci” and “Shaguayingyu”. The paper will focus on several key aspects, including the diversity of resources, the review and learning mechanism, the convenience of

operation, and the pleasure of learning. The aim is to provide guidance for learners in choosing the tool that best suits their language learning needs.

The paper is mainly divided into two parts:

1. Literature review: including the introduction of English vocabulary and the status quo of relevant research both at home and abroad. The paper then demonstrates theories involved.
2. Findings: the paper shows both apps' abundance of resources, mechanism of learning and reviewing, convenience of operation, and the fun of learning.

2. Literature Review

Recently, an increasing number of domestic scholars have conducted research on English vocabulary learning apps. Zhong (2017) made a comparison between these two popular apps – “Bubeidanci” and “Baicizhan” (Vocab Master) and analyzed their functions and features. She discussed their differences in these aspects such as vocabulary book, the model of memorizing words, sample sentences and the model of consolidating vocabulary. She also pointed their strengths and weaknesses, and offered advice on choosing and using the apps. Zhu's (2018) research verified the effectiveness of learning English vocabulary using mobile phone APP through empirical analysis. Results show that there exists remarkable advantage for non-English-major undergraduates to learn words via “Bubeidanci” app, and they confirmed its potential on improving the efficiency of word memory. Through questionnaires of students from Shandong Yingcai College, Zhang (2019) found that most of the students tend to use apps to learn vocabulary and have achieved remarkable learning results, but there were also efficiency issues and APP performance issues needed to be improved. Taking “Baicizhan” app as an example, Shi (2021) discussed the effectiveness of the apps in students' English vocabulary learning. She also pointed that those apps could greatly enrich learning methods.

Foreign scholars may have different research directions about mobile learning apps. Klimova & Polakova (2020) used qualitative methods to focus on students' perception of mobile vocabulary learning apps. Their research showed that these apps are helpful to some learning behavior such as looking up words at any time, providing feedback of practice and correction and making relevant preparations of final exams. Al-Johali (2019) used similar method to find that language learning with assisted mobile devices could effectively promote vocabulary teaching and learning. Teachers thought that mobile apps are easy and useful, and they are more popular than traditional learning methods. His research proposed some advice and elaborated the significance of teaching, and he aimed

at enhancing mobile-assisted vocabulary teaching in the schools of Saudi Arabia. Through quantitative research methods, Kohnke (2020) explored learners' perception of vocabulary learning apps and proved that such apps could let students have better learning experience and motivation.

In conclusion, preliminary results have been achieved in domestic and foreign research on the application of mobile phone applications in English vocabulary learning, but there is still room for improvement and research potential. Future research will continue to deeply explore the combination of mobile learning apps and traditional learning methods as well as customized learning plans.

3. Framework

3.1 MALL

MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) emphasized the application of mobile Internet in English learning. Compared with traditional teaching pedagogy, learners can use electronic devices to learn foreign languages at any place and any time rather than sit in the classroom in the specific time (Miangah & Nezarat, 2012).

The research could benefit from MALL in the aspects such as learning English grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. App shows grammatical rule and then a series of quizzes that include multiple-choice questions, and learners should choose the right answers from the given choices. The forms of true or false questions or fill in the blanks could be adopted on grammatical practices and then students are asked to answer. Grammatical explanations can be provided to learners either by voice or text.

Learners can flexibly utilize various strategies to learn vocabulary. Mobile apps can offer learners an appropriate number of exercises, in which learners can use keyboards to spell words that they have just learned. Some of the exercises could be multiple-choice questions, which requires learners to choose the right Chinese explanation based on the English pronunciation heard. These methods could make learners better memorize and consolidate words. As we can see, learners can benefit greatly from mobile vocabulary learning apps.

3.2 FRAME Model

Koole (2009) put forward the FRAME (The Framework for the Rational Analysis of Mobile Education) Model, thinking that mobile learning is a process that is formed by the convergence of mobile devices, human learning capabilities and social interaction. This model is aimed at resolving modern education issues such as information

overloading, knowledge navigation and coworking. It has guiding significance for the development of future mobile devices, learning materials, and the design of mobile education teaching and learning strategies. The model

provides a comprehensive framework for the design, realization and assessment of mobile learning environment, emphasizing the potential of mobile learning in providing personalized and context-oriented learning experience.

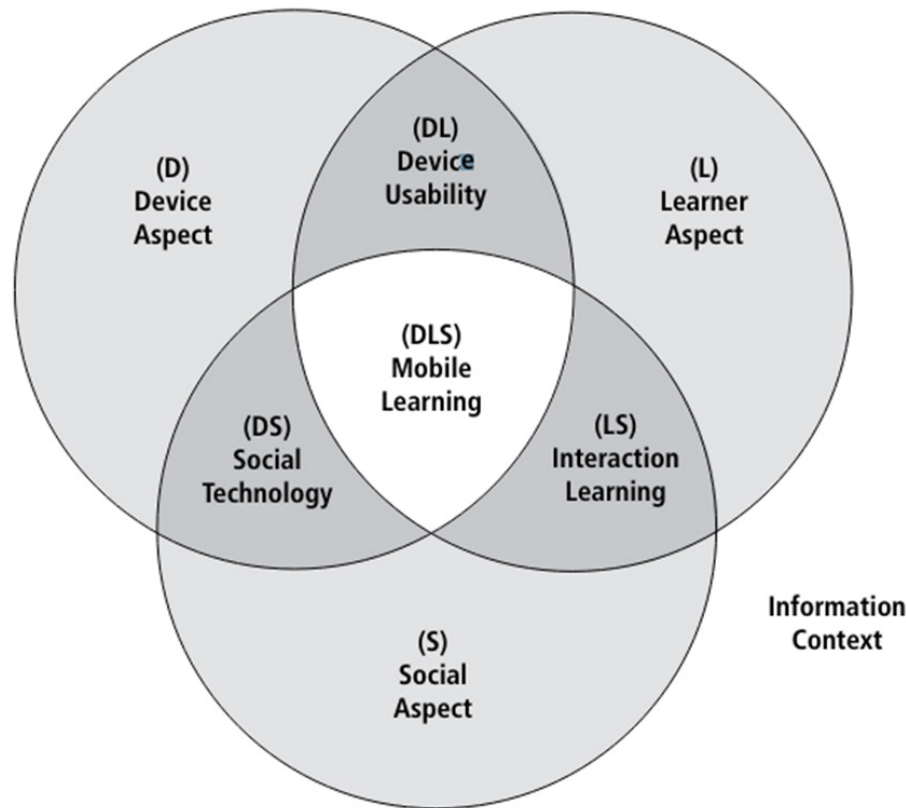


Figure 1 FRAME Model

The Model is displayed via the Venn diagram (see Figure 1), which includes three aspects – Device, Learner, and Social.

1) Device: It involves the physical, technical and functional characteristics of mobile devices, such as size, weight, input capacity, output capacity, storage and processing speed.

2) Learner: It considers a person's cognitive abilities, memory, prior knowledge, emotions, and possible motivations.

3) Social: It involves social interaction and cooperation, including dialogue, cooperation, and rules of social interaction.

The Venn diagram shows an intersection where two circles overlap, which contains attributes belonging to both aspects. The main intersection (DLS) at the center of the Venn diagram represents the combination of all three

aspects and defines the ideal mobile learning situation. Assessing the extent to which all areas of the FRAME model are used in mobile learning scenarios can enable practitioners to design more effective mobile learning experiences.

Here is a detailed description of the intersection where two circles overlap:

1) Device usability (DL): Connecting devices and learners in terms of device portability, information availability, psychological comfort, and satisfaction.

2) Social technology (DS): Describing how mobile devices facilitate communication and collaboration between individuals and systems.

3) Interaction learning (LS): Based on social constructivism, it emphasizes that learning occurs through interaction with other people, the environment, tools, and information.

4. Comparative Analysis of English Vocabulary Learning APP

4.1 Abundance of resources

4.1.1 Featured resources

“Bubeidanci” offers learners real context of language use with its feature of abundant original example sentences, which could help learners to better understand and memorize the usage of words. The authoritative Collins Dictionary introduced by the app could provide more comprehensive support for learners in vocabulary learning.

“Shaguayingyu” provides learners with more intuitive learning materials mainly through short videos of real people practicing pronunciation. This design of enhancing the learning experience through multimedia resources is consistent with the MALL theory’s emphasis on using the multimedia functions of mobile devices to improve learning outcomes.

4.1.2 Additional learning resources

“Bubeidanci” comes with the program “Qingtingyingyu” (Lingo Listen). Although the program needs to be installed independently, its resources for practicing listening further expand methods for learners to learn a language.

4.2.3 Mechanism of reviewing

“Bubeidanci” uses the Ebbinghaus memory curve to intelligently plan review. Learners can flexibly adjust the review plan according to their own learning progress and memory status.

“Shaguayingyu” helps learners consolidate their memory by retesting them. Although this method of repeated practice is simple and effective, it lacks in personalization and flexibility.

4.3 Convenience of operation

4.3.1 Interface of app

The operating interface of “Bubeidanci” has a variety of designs, the homepage wallpaper is updated daily, and users can also change the font, turn on white noise and other settings according to their preferences.

The appearance design of “Shaguayingyu” is relatively simple, which to some extent limits the user experience of learners.

4.3.2 Electronic devices supported

“Bubeidanci” can support operation with an external keyboard, mouse and stylus, which is more friendly to users using tablets and PCs.

“Shaguayingyu” offers grammar lessons and oral practice, which includes other aspects of language learning and enriches learners’ learning experience.

4.2 Mechanism of learning and reviewing

4.2.1 Page of word details

The page of word details in “Bubeidanci” highlights the key points of examinations such as those for postgraduate entrance, which helps learners carry out targeted learning. “Shaguayingyu” offers a variety of methods to learners through word mnemonics videos and real-person pronunciation videos.

4.2.2 Sequence of learning words

In “Bubeidanci”, learners are allowed to set the number of words to be memorized in each group, and most of the words in each group are synonyms. This way of organizing learning content by topic or category helps learners improve their learning efficiency through associative memory.

“Shaguayingyu” often presents words in alphabetical order. Although this traditional learning method is simple and intuitive, it limits learners’ systematic learning of words to a certain extent.

“Shaguayingyu” can only be operated through the screen of a mobile device or an external mouse, which to some extent limits the user experience of learners.

4.3.3 Guidance of use

“Bubeidanci” provides detailed software usage instructions in the “Tips (bulb-shaped button)” on the word memorization interface, which provides convenience for learners using the software.

“Shaguayingyu” only provides usage guidance when users log in for the first time, which limits the learners’ usage experience to a certain extent.

4.3.4 Management of unfamiliar words

“Bubeidanci” allows learners to take notes and collect new words, which makes it convenient for learners to record and review new words.

“Shaguayingyu” only supports the collection of new words, which to some extent limits learners’ in-depth learning and memorization of new words.

4.4 Fun of learning

“Bubeidanci”: it increases the fun and social nature of learning by signing in to receive virtual currency and forming teams to check in, thereby increasing learners’

participation and motivation to learn.

“Shaguayingyu”: it increases the fun and competitiveness of learning by giving out gems and rank incentives for signing in, thereby increasing learners’ participation and motivation.

Through the comparative analysis of the two app in the four aspects -- abundance of resources, mechanism of learning and reviewing, convenience of operation, and fun of learning, it can be found that these two apps have their own strengths and weaknesses. Learners can choose vocabulary learning apps based on their own capabilities and needs.

5. Conclusion

The author of the paper finds that both “Bubeidanci” and “Shaguayingyu” show their own advantages and characteristics in many aspects. As for the abundance of resources, with its rich vocabulary books and authoritative Collins Dictionary, “Bubeidanci” could offer more comprehensive support to learners in vocabulary learning. Plenty of original example sentences and diversified learning resources in the app are helpful for learners to understand and memorize words. “Bubeidanci” also provides “Qingtingyingyu”, which enriches ways for learners to learn a language. Through real-life pronunciation short videos, cartoons and pictures, “Shaguayingyu” offers learners more intuitive learning materials. Its rich vocabulary mnemonics videos and oral pronunciation videos help learners deepen their memory through the combination of vision and hearing. “Shaguayingyu” also provided grammar lessons and oral practice, which includes many aspects in language learning.

Through the comparative analysis of “Bubeidanci” and

“Shaguayingyu”, the research offers valuable references for English learners and educators. Future research could be further expanded and deepened based on the current research so as to better meet learners’ needs and promote the development of English teaching.

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