# Utilization of Smartphones in English Teaching and Learning at Nghe An University of Economics

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the use of smartphones in English teaching and learning in Nghe An university of Economics and to determine how this technology influences students' language acquisition. Nearly two hundred students and six lecturers were selected to be the population of the study. By using a descriptive survey and the questionnaire, the study was conducted among students of the first year to third year. Some recommendations were introduced through the light of the results of the study such as: how to use smartphones as learning devices, how to take advantage of smartphones to support the teaching and learning of English in various stages of education and how to establish a training course of English language using smartphones.

Keywords: smartphone, language learning, language teaching, mobile learning, language acquisition

## 1 Introduction

These days, the rapid development of technology has led to the changes in many aspects of the society, including the changes in education. Innovative technologies are used in classes almost everywhere. These technologies have become an essential tool in raising students' interest in learning and in developing students' visual creative thinking. The use of innovative technologies in the classes provides the opportunity to enhance students' cognitive, mental and independent activities, and to intensify the educational process. These technologies make it possible not only to change the forms and methods of teaching, but also significantly transform and enrich the educational paradigm.

Smartphone is one of the products in ICT (Information Communication and Technology) that leads to the new trend in teaching methodology. The booming of smartphones has given numerous opportunities for students to utilize applications in entertainment and learning activities. In the days of covid 19, when schools and universities in Vietnam have to give lessons online, smartphones have been considered the latest trend in education, especially in situations of having no PC. As stated in the works of Valk, Rashid, & Elder (2010), the significant roles of the smartphones in learning have made the process of learning more flexible, easy and have helped to reduce the practice of classroom learning. Since, according to Norries et al. (2011), smartphones enables students not only to access educational materials at anytime, anywhere, but also to take photos of lessons that are taught in class with the camera on their smartphones so that they can review them at a later date, especially in distance study and autonomous learning.

In order to investigate whether or not the smartphone use can influence students' language learning and acquisition at Nghe an College of Economics, especially in time of Covid 19, I have conducted the research "Utilization of smartphones in English teaching and text textlearning at Nghe an University of Economics".

## 2 Literature Review

The roles of smartphones in education are one of the main issues that many researchers such as Shuler (2009); Gaskell & Mills (2010); Hough, (2011); Rosemary Twum, 2017., have been discussing about. In a

study conducted by Gaskell & Mills (2010), smartphones have been recognized to help student in accessing learning materials easily. According to Shuler (2009), with smartphones, students can gather, access, and process information outside the classroom as well as support learning in a real-world context. Smartphones have been infiltrating into everybody's daily activities and become an essential part of their lives. Students are not an exception. According to a survey by Statista – the Global Business Data Platform, there are about 61.3 million smartphones in use in Vietnam, which places Vietnam in the top 10 countries with the highest number of smartphones. Also, the Covid-19 pandemic has made smartphone usage capacity of Vietnamese users increase significantly in 2020. On average, a Vietnamese person consumed approximately 6.5 hours in using the internet per day in 2021 (Statista). With a smartphone, people can perform numerous tasks, including family and friend connection, bill payment, education, and entertainment…. However, the strong penetration of smartphones can lead to some of the influence of technology, such as social media addiction and strong isolation when forced to unplug from technology (Hough, 2011, sited after Rosemary Twum, 2017).

In order to help students, make use of the positive effects of smartphones in education, many other researches have been conducted to point out how to maximize benefits from smartphones in the learning process, especially in language study. Kim and Kwon (2012), in their work, have mentioned hundreds of smartphone applications related to "ESL" that can be accessed by students themselves. With the same ideas, Masiu & Chukwuere (2018) stated that "The smartphone has also made students' lives easier, as they can access their school information on the gadget through electronic learning (e-learning), and mobile learning (m-learning)."

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey was seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. How are smartphones used in language learning and teaching at Nghe an College of Economics?
2. What are the recommendations for students to benefit from smartphones?

## 3    Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey. The researcher was interested in examining information efficiently and logically in order to emerge with useful data. The design allowed for quantitative techniques to be collected and data analyzed for this study. This was considered appropriate by the researcher to give a wider information and systematic description of the use of smartphones to support English learning students at Nghe an University of Economics.

### 3.1    Research Participants

The participants in this study were generalized to 180 fourth-year students from the Accounting Department who have joined three English courses of General English 1, General English 2 and English of Accounting. The population also consisted of 06 English lecturers in Foreign Language Group at Nghe an University of Economics.

### 3.2    Data Collection and Analysis

To support the aim of investigating how students use their smartphones in daily activities and in learning; and how lecturers use their smartphones in daily activities and in teaching, questionnaires were used during the study. The questionnaires employed a five-point Likert-type scale and the participants were to choose from always to never. Scores 01, 02, 03, 04, 05 are for never, seldom, sometimes, usually, always respectively. Spearman Brown formulas was adapted to verify the reliability of the data collected in the survey through the questionnaire.

The formula was shown as following:

$$rSB = 2 * rhh / (1 + rhh) \quad \textbf{(1)}$$

(rSB: Reliability Spearman-Brown)

(rhh: Coefficient of correlation between odd and even)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| rSB ≥ 0,7 | Reliable data | **(2)** |
| rSB < 0,7 | Unreliable data | |

Coefficient of correlation between odd and even (rhh) is calculated in EXCEL using following function:

$$rhh = correl (array1, array2) \quad \textbf{(3)}$$

(array 1: total even scores, array 2: total odd scores)

A descriptive analysis of the questionnaire items was also performed by calculating Mode, Median, Mean and Standard deviation. These values are calculated in EXCEL using functions below:

| VALUES | FORMULAS | |
|---|---|---|
| Mode | =mode (number1, number2, …) | |
| Median | =median (number1, number2,…) | **(4)** |
| Mean | =average (number1, number2, …) | |
| Standard deviation | =stdev (number1, number2, …) | |

## 4    Results and Discussion

As stated above, to seek for the way students use their smartphones, the survey of 180 fourth-year students of the Accounting Department was carried out. The questionnaires involved with the frequency in using smartphones for entertainment and for learning. After collecting the questionnaires, I started to verify the reliability of the data collected using formula (1) and then described the data by Mode, Median, Mean and Standard deviation on EXCEL using the functions in (4). The results showed that 97,2 % of the students surveyed have smartphones and the way they used their smartphones was detailly reported in the following table:

**Table 1:** *The students' use of smartphones*

| | The use smartphones | Mode | Median | Mean | Stdev |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I. For learning purposes** | | | | | |
| 1 | Using learning supporting applications to improve knowledge | 2 | 2 | 2,0 | 0,8 |
| 2 | Using online meeting applications to join online classes | 5 | 5 | 4,7 | 0,7 |
| 3 | Following the University Website to check the studying result | 5 | 5 | 4,6 | 0,9 |
| 4 | Following the University Website to check for the schedule | 5 | 5 | 4,7 | 0,7 |
| 5 | Looking for learning documents | 2 | 2 | 2,1 | 0,9 |
| 6 | Looking up for new word when learning English | 5 | 5 | 4 | 1,2 |
| 7 | Updating new things in learning on the Internet | 1 | 1 | 1,7 | 0,7 |
| 8 | Downloading learning documents and materials | 2 | 2 | 1,9 | 0.7 |
| 9 | Listening to audios or watching videos in English to smart listening skill | 3 | 3 | 2,4 | 0,7 |

| 10 | Reading English documents and doing reading comprehension exercises on the Internet to smart reading skill | 2 | 2 | 2,1 | 0,4 |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 11 | Following the lecturers' schedules and assignments | 1 | 1 | 1,5 | 0,6 |
| 12 | Recording the lecturers' lessons | 2 | 2 | 1,8 | 0,8 |
| 13 | Taking photos of lecturers' slides | 1 | 1 | 1,6 | 0,8 |
| 14 | Logging facebook to follow English teaching livestreams | 2 | 2 | 1,9 | 0,7 |
| 15 | Logging zalo to upload and download English documents | 3 | 3 | 2,5 | 0,7 |
| 16 | Logging facebook and zalo to join English learning forums | 2 | 2 | 2,1 | 0,4 |
| **II. For other purposes** | | | | | |
| 17 | Logging facebook and zalo to follow friends' and relatives' news | 5 | 5 | 4,7 | 0,9 |
| 18 | Making phone calls to friends and relatives | 5 | 5 | 4,8 | 0,7 |
| 19 | Receiving phone calls | 5 | 5 | 4,8 | 0,7 |
| 20 | Giving messages | 5 | 5 | 4,7 | 0,8 |
| 21 | Chatting with friends and relatives | 5 | 5 | 4,8 | 0,7 |
| 22 | Making new friends on the internet | 2 | 2 | 2,1 | 0,4 |
| 23 | Surfing the internet for fun | 5 | 5 | 4,6 | 0,9 |
| 24 | Watching films | 5 | 5 | 4,8 | 0,7 |
| 25 | Listening to music | 3 | 3 | 2,9 | 1,1 |
| 26 | Reading stories | 2 | 2 | 1,9 | 0,7 |
| 27 | Playing games | 5 | 5 | 4,5 | 0,9 |
| 28 | Taking photos | 5 | 5 | 4,8 | 0,8 |
| 29 | Uploading photos | 5 | 5 | 4,7 | 0,7 |
| 30 | Making videos | 5 | 5 | 4,8 | 0,7 |
| 31 | Showing their status | 1 | 1 | 1,4 | 0,7 |

According to the values in Table 1 above and basing on the criteria in (2), the data collected were RELIABLE because the Reliability coefficient was above 0.70. The descriptive analysis of the items were performed to investigate the use of smartphones among the students. Generally, an item with mean score greater than 3.5 indicated that the item was in the high frequency of use; an item with mean score between 2.5 to 3.5 indicated the medium frequency of use; and an item with mean score smaller than 2.4 indicated a low frequency of use. Through the data described in Table 1, we could see that item 2, 3, 4,17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30 were activities in the high frequency, which indicated that students used smartphones for checking learning results; checking learning schedules; making and receiving calls; logging social websites to follow the news from their friends and relatives; watching films; surfing the internet for fun; playing games; taking and uploading photos and making videos. The items 1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 22, 26, 31 were below 2.4 and, and were in the low frequency. These items involve activities relating to learning English. The rest items ranged from 3.5 to 2.4 and, consequently, were in the medium frequency. Through the data, I can conclude that majority of the students at Nghe an University rarely use their smartphones for the aim of learning, except signing in online classes in the time of Covid 19.

In order to know how English lectures at Nghe an University of Economics use their smartphones, I conducted a survey drawing the participation of 06 English lecturers. The questionnaires consist of the items following:

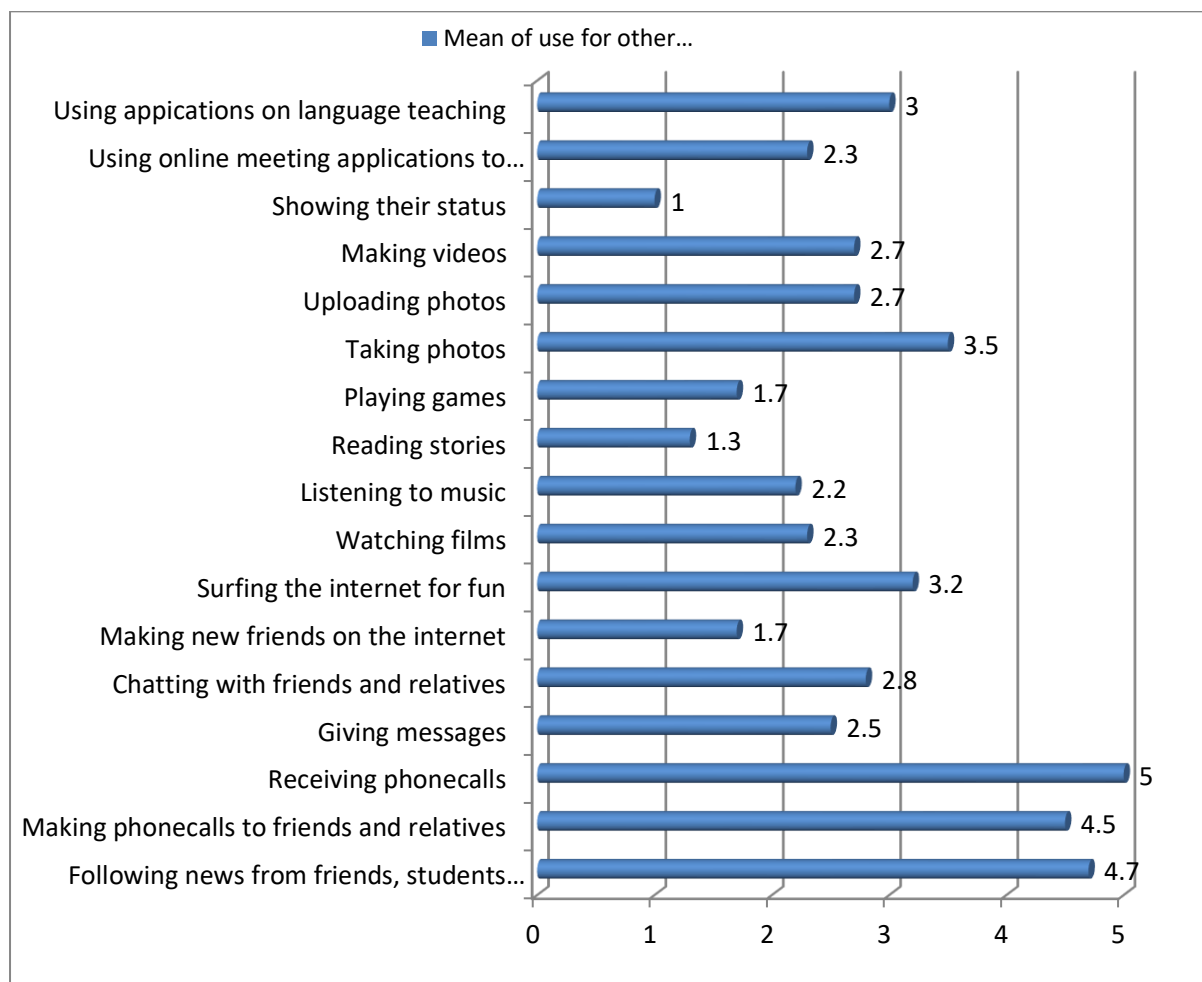**Table 2:** *The lectures' use of smartphones*

| | The use smartphones | Mode | Median | Mean | Stdev |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I. For teaching purposes** | | | | | |
| 1 | Using learning supporting applications to improve knowledge | 4 | 3,5 | 3,3 | 0,8 |
| 2 | Using online meeting applications to conduct online classes | 2 | 2,5 | 2.3 | 1,3 |
| 3 | Following the College Website to check for the schedule | 5 | 5 | 4,8 | 0,4 |
| 4 | Looking for teaching documents | 5 | 5 | 4,8 | 0,4 |
| 5 | Looking up new words | 2 | 2,5 | 3 | 1,3 |
| 6 | Giving messages to send notifications (class cancellation, change of lecture venue, change in time of lectures and other administrative duties) | 3 | 3,5 | 3,7 | 1,2 |
| 7 | Downloading teaching materials | 5 | 4 | 4 | 0,9 |
| 8 | Listening to audios or watching videos in English to smart listening skill | 3 | 3,5 | 3,7 | 0,8 |
| 9 | Reading English documents on the Internet to smart reading skill | 3 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| 10 | Following students learning process | 1 | 1 | 1,5 | 1,2 |
| 11 | Giving tasks to students | 1 | 2 | 1,5 | 0,8 |
| 12 | Logging social websites to follow English teaching livestreams | 2 | 2 | 1,8 | 0,8 |
| 13 | Logging social website to upload and download English documents | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 14 | Logging social website to join English teaching forums | 1 | 1 | 1,5 | 0,8 |
| **II. For other purposes** | | | | | |
| 15 | Logging facebook and zalo to follow news from friends, students and relatives | 5 | 5 | 4,7 | 0,5 |
| 16 | Making phone calls to friends and relatives | 5 | 4,5 | 4,5 | 0,5 |
| 17 | Receiving phone calls | 5 | 4,5 | 4,5 | 0,5 |
| 18 | Giving messages | 3 | 3,5 | 3,5 | 0,5 |
| 19 | Chatting with friends and relatives | 3 | 3 | 2,8 | 0,8 |
| 20 | Making new friends on the internet | 2 | 2 | 1,7 | 0,5 |
| 21 | Surfing the internet for fun | 5 | 4,5 | 4,2 | 1 |
| 22 | Watching films | 2 | 2 | 2,3 | 0,5 |
| 23 | Listening to music | 2 | 2 | 2,2 | 0,8 |
| 24 | Reading stories | 1 | 1 | 1,3 | 0,5 |
| 25 | Playing games | 2 | 2 | 1,7 | 0,5 |
| 26 | Taking photos | 4 | 3,5 | 3,5 | 0,5 |
| 27 | Uploading photos | 2 | 2,5 | 2,7 | 0,8 |
| 28 | Making videos | 3 | 3 | 2,7 | 0,5 |
| 29 | Showing their status | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

From Table 2, it could be clearly seen that English lecturers at Nghe an University of Economics use their smartphones for teaching purposes more than for entertainment purposes. The highest frequency was in their teaching schedules and looking for teaching materials (M = 4,8). For entertainment and other purposes, the highest frequency was in receiving phone calls (M=5) and in communicating with their friends and relatives (M = 4,7).

However, for learning purposes, the lecturers haven't made the benefits of smartphones in the fields of managing students' learning process and giving tasks for students to do outside the classroom yet. Their uses were mainly focused on themselves, not much on the interactions between lecturers and students. This judgment is obviously shown in the charts below:
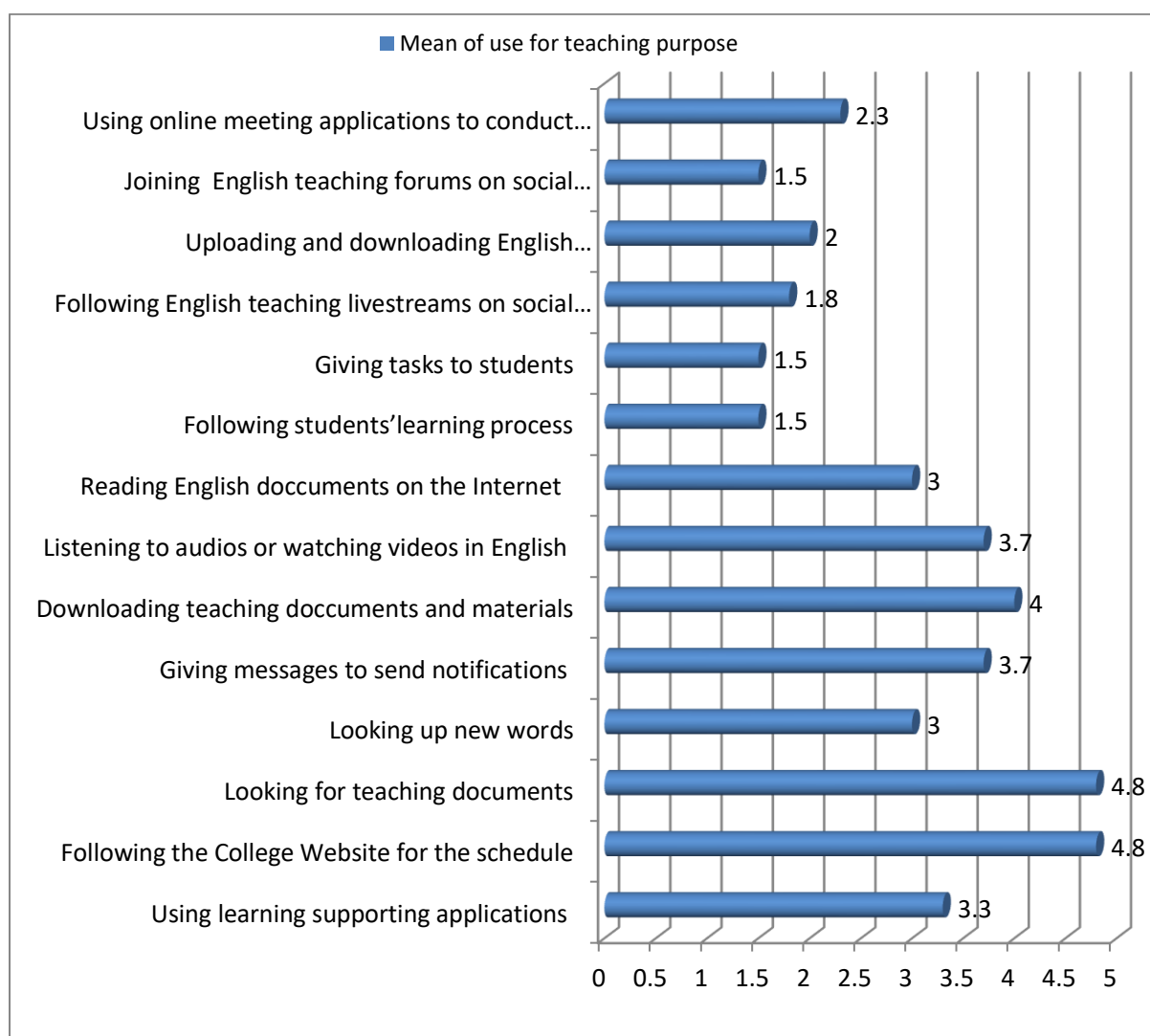


**Chart 1:** *The lectures' use of smartphones for teaching*

**Chart 2:** *The lectures' use of smartphones for other purposes*

## 5    Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

A.  Majority of students have had their own mobile phones among which there were more than 97% smartphones. They use their smartphones for entertainment and other purposes more than for learning purpose. Their use of smartphones was mainly focused on the interaction between them and their friends, personal activities and different ways of entertainment.

B.  All English lecturers have had smartphones and they have used them for their own teaching purpose, however, not regularly and not much for the interaction between the lecturers and students. They know how to benefit from smartphones for their knowledge and their teaching skills. However, besides smartphones, they have also possessed a computer. They have more choices than students do. Therefore, for teaching purposes, they prefer using computers

## 6    Recommendations

### 6.1    For English Lecturers

Lecturers are encouraged to design activities that allow students to appropriately use their smartphones during lectures. These technologies can stimulate the interest of the students and make English learning more interactive. As a result, lecturers should explore different ways mobile phone technologies can be used to support learning. Here recommended some teaching practices:

### 6.1.1 Vocabulary activities

A picture is worth a thousand words. Have students use their smartphones to look up specific word by using visual dictionaries.

### 6.1.2 Translation Activities

Students should be given translation activities online. With the help of smartphones, they will find it easier and more interesting to do a task on translation.

### 6.1.3 Use Apps for Communication Activities

We all communicate with our smartphones in different ways depending on different apps. Ask students to use message app to give text messages in groups to fulfill their given group work.

### 6.1.4 Practice Pronunciation

Smartphones can help record audio or video. Have your students go home and practice mimicking pronunciation in the pause between each suggestion. Or ask students to make a video about the topic given, then ask them to send the clip to lecturers. Make sure that the lecturer will watch the clip and give feedback timely. Some of the popular apps for pronunciation purpose are Elsa speak, Talk it, Pronunciation power, Izy speak ect...

### 6.1.5 Further Assignments using Google Forms, Liveworksheet.com, Quizziz.com, Wordwall.com

Google Forms is a free online tool which allows users to create forms, surveys, quizzes and assignments as well as to collaboratively edit and share the forms with other people. Lecturers and educators can use Google forms to assess their students at the beginning of the class and gauge pre-existing knowledge.

*Liveworksheet.com*

Liveworksheet is a website allowing teachers to produce many types of interactive online exercises with self-correction and self-grading. The self-correction and self-grading function can help teachers save time. Besides, the site allows multimedia activities online, which motivates the interest of the learners.

*Quizziz.com*

Quizizz is a highly rated student engagement platform that offers many features to create a fun, interactive, and engaging classroom. It helps teachers conduct formative assessments, assign homework, and have other interactions with students (for all grades) in an engaging way.

*Word world.com* is also a free online website providing lots of English learning activities. The activities are constructed in the form of fun games, which helps motivate students.

### 6.1.6 Further Administration using Google Classroom, Facebook, Zalo

Google classroom can be used to create online classrooms from students' gmail. Lecturers and educators can upload files, links or assignments in text form, audio form or video form in Google classroom. These apps enable lecturers to give and receive feedback, to give notifications on schedules or deadlines and to chat with students anywhere and anytime if there accesses the wifi.

Facebook and Zalo are used by most of the students. It is free, easy and timely for students to receive any information, notifications, deadline or assignments given from Facebook and Zalo. Therefore, lecturers should create closed groups on Facebook and Zalo to help in managing classes.

Lecturers can also formulate automatic alerts to their students on important information, such as quiz dates, additional required readings, required assignments as well as links to helpful websites such as: https://learningenglish.voanews.com;http://lang-8.com/;http://elllo.org/; https://www.talkenglish.com; http://funeasyenglish.com/;https://www.duolingo.com/etc.

There should be seminars for lecturers to be made more aware on how effectively the smartphones could be used to enhance or support teaching English.

## 6.2    For Students

a.   Students should be aware and take an interest in using smartphones to support their learning experiences.

b.   Students should be more encouraged by their lecturers to use chat room, such as Viber, Skype and Whatsapp for group discussions, share images and information concerning English learning

c.   Students should know and download learning supporting apps to their own smartphones such as: Elsa speak, Talk it, Pronunciation power, Izy speak etc.

d.   Students should log in the websites offering English learning materials to self-master language skills. Here are some useful websites for students to visit: https://learningenglish.voanews.com; http://lang-8.com/; https://www.talkenglish.com; http://funeasyenglish.com/; https://www.duolingo.com/; http://elllo.org/ etc.

e.   Students should watch films with English subtitles and listen to English songs on YouTube more often.

f.   Students should participate in seminars about the potential and importance of smartphones to enhance English learning.

Each manuscript should contain a conclusion section which may contain the main outcome of the work, highlighting its importance and relevance. Conclusion should be written in continuous manner with running sentences which normally includes main outcome of the research work, its application, limitation and recommendation. Do not use any subheading or point list within the conclusion.

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