

Smart Phone Assisted Language Learning

Mustafa Azmi Bingol

Ishik University, Erbil, Iraq, Email: mustafa.bingol@ishik.edu.iq

Behcet Celik

Ishik University, Erbil, Iraq, Email: behcet.celik@ishik.edu.iq

Naci Yildiz

Ishik University, Erbil, Iraq, Email: naci.yildiz@ishik.edu.iq

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Abstract: Nowadays mobile phones have a remarkable impact on language learning. Because it is not imaginable to live without mobile phone and every single individual has at least one. Most learners consider smartphone applications as a significant facility in the progress of language learning. Mobile learning in other words m-learning is a very new topic. This term also overlaps with e-learning that means learning by electronic devices such as computers, laptops, tablets and internet. M-learning can take place either in-classroom or out-of-classroom. Programs or applications can be downloaded and installed easily. There are thousands of programs that may help to improve students' language skills, grammar, reading, writing, speaking, listening, pronunciation, vocabulary and increase their consciousness of such international tests like TOEFL, IELTS, SAT and so on. It is confirmed by many researchers that effectiveness of mobile assisted language learning is indisputable. Many experts put emphasis on the need for sufficient technical assist (e.g., Cochrane, 2007; Franklin & Peng, 2008).

Key Words: Smartphone Assisted Language Learning, Mobile Learning, E-learning,

Introduction

Today English is the most important second language all over the world. That is why producing helpful smartphone applications for encouraging influential English learning is a vital issue in the English-language studying area (Collins, 2005). Students have to memorize and practice a large number of vocabulary and they should learn grammatical structures in order to have acceptable English.

Students specify that the main benefits from using their smartphones are speed of access to the Internet, their own information, course material, personal organization and time management program. In some

cases, “mobile learning” refers to handheld devices, potentially available anytime, anywhere, assisted learning whether that learning is formal or informal (Kukulka-Hulme & Shield 2008).

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

Chinnery (2006) used the term mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) as a first time. The advantages of using MALL are considerable; MALL provide students easily access language learning materials and communicate with people at any time, from anywhere and the nature of digital technology ease students’ participation in both cooperative and personal language learning activities development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing, skills. Students do not have to study a second language inside the classroom. They can learn it using mobile devices when and where they want.

Benefits of Smart Phone Assisted Language Learning

There are a lot of advantages of smartphone assisted language learning. Some of them are; MALL allows students to access language learning materials easily and more quickly and communicates with other people anytime and anywhere. The character of digital technology ease students’ take part in both collective and individualized language learning activities allowing fast development of speaking, reading, listening, and writing, skills. Mobile technology supplies several resources and devices for language learning that inspire learners to be more motivated, confident, and social.

According to Klopfer and his colleagues (2002) the features mobile devices have are Portability, Social interactivity, Context sensitivity, Connectivity, Individuality.

Skills That Can Be Developed By M-Learning

The best application does not try to do everything. It aims to develop one thing particularly. Application makers who come from the desktop computing often overload too much into a program. Smartphone users do not want one application perform everything and they want lots of little programs that develop one thing well. So as teachers we should define first on what purpose we need the application for.

Vocabulary

Teachers can prepare vocabulary exercises covered in the classroom. Students can be given the assignment in the classroom and asked to accomplish them via their mobile phones before sending them back to the instructor (Miangah & Nearat, 2012). SMS is another common method of learning new vocabulary based on the subjects covered in the classroom. Vocabularies can also be explained by the pictures shown on learners’ mobile displays for better comprehension of new words.

Pronunciation

Dictionaries are not just to look up the meanings of the words they also show how to pronounce the words. Mobile dictionary applications contain sound functions so that learners may download to their mobile phones and learn the pronunciation of new words. They may also record their own voices and

send them to the teacher via multimedia function. This would help in evaluation the students' weaknesses in pronunciation (Miangah & Nearat, 2012).

Reading

There are a lot of reading related applications and activities. A well-designed reading activity can be used as a course material. It can be sent to the learners through SMS or e-mail. And then they may be asked to read and complete the exercises. Also English news articles can be sent to the students' mobile phones. Personalized Intelligent Mobile (PIM) learning system was generated by Chen and Hsu (2008). Through this system, learners receive English news articles on their mobile phones based on their reading abilities measured by lecturers. The PIM system can automatically discover unknown words from the articles.

Reading passages help learners to enrich their vocabulary knowledge and help them to promote reading comprehension. Reading activities can be conveyed to learners through e-mail or SMS. After that they may demanded to reply the assignment in order to evaluate. Technology changes day by day and a new device come into life every day. In addition e-books may allow more social atmosphere, with a group of students cooperating to read, discuss on the same topic, all of them are using their own devices (Sharples et al., 2012).

Grammar

Programs can be found and installed that explains grammatical points. These applications teach rules and structures that are followed by multiple-choice questions. Such applications contain a great deal of exercises. Different exercises can be developed, like true-false or fill-in the blank, and practiced by the students (Miangah and Nearat, 2012).

Listening and speaking

Teachers may establish a platform in which students listen to listening passages on their mobile phones. Then, they may ask listening comprehension test related with listening part. Another example of m-learning for listening was described by Huang and Sun (2010) who formed multimedia system for English language learners depend on their mobile devices' strengths. Students were told to access a special multimedia material contains website and order learning courses which consist of a set of video materials and exercises. They consider that mobile multimedia English listening exercise system increases learner's listening abilities to a higher degree.

Blogs

Blogs are one of the latest trends in language learning and teaching. They provoke language productivity; enable to share ideas and collaborative activities. Time and space boundaries disappear; learners share and argue their ideas in a cyber-world. In addition, live conversations and visual contents become popular (Gholami & Azarmi, 2012).

Blogging and sharing memories, experiences and ideas are unlimited to written form language. The trending new form of media known as podcasting stimulates users to have audio blogs or podcasts. These podcasts are free to use and also downloadable. Subscribers can follow any podcaster they like to receive updates. Actually, podcasting is already widely utilized in language learning by learners who record their own content or access authentic resources (Chinnery, 2006).

Game-Like Activities

Games and game-like activities are for all kind of people who like them. Such games can be integrated to language learning activities easily. Especially grammar and vocabulary games are addictive for adults. When they try to increase their high scores they learn a lot of grammar rules and new words. Games might look like for children, but bear in mind on the smartphone, adults also like playing games, as well. Therefore, even the programs that are not really games may contain game-like features. As in the games they have feedback cycles, awards, get extra properties. The difficulty of trying to complete sections or to reach better scores will retain students playing and learning. On the other hand paper based activities would quickly become tedious.

The real life knowledge and the game's virtual world are attached by mobile learning activities. This has been implemented in MALL by game producers who invented game-based language learning for ESL (English as Second Language) learners.

Conclusion

Understanding the practicality of mobile learning will necessitate new roles for teachers. One obstacle to the improvement of mobile learning is the lack of experienced instructors who can efficiently adapt mobile technologies into their lessons. There is huge demand in research on the methods that helps providing convenient MALL environment for learners. In addition, some skills as listening and speaking need further improvements in MALL research (Miangah & Nearat, 2012).

Development in technology causes other types of mobile technology, such as tablets and laptops with many extra functions. Smartphones now have the same features as microcomputers. Smartphones enhance the learners' autonomy and collaboration. In other word, MALL can be a practical formula to language learning obstacles in terms of place and time. Smartphones cannot substitute qualified teachers, but the growing trend of smartphones among ESL learners build possibilities to provide additional language practice anytime, anywhere.

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