



MJAL 4:2 Summer 2012

ISSN 0974-8741

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns

Naveen K Mehta

Reader & Head

Communication Skills Department

MIT, Ujjain (MP)

Dr. Naveen K Mehta is presently working as a Reader and Head –Communication Skills Department, MIT, Ujjain (MP). He is a former Faculty of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, New Delhi. He has more than seven years of research, academic and teaching experience. He has been honoured by the Prime Minister of India and Ministry of Human Resource Development of India on account of his meritorious and outstanding academic career. He is UGC- NET & SLET qualified as well triple post graduate in Business Management, Education and English Literature.

Abstract

Over the past few years, IT driven teaching of English is very successful in making learning of language live and interesting. Like CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) may also prove to be very helpful in honing language skills Teaching of English as a Second Language demand a high level of innovation and integration of various teaching techniques. In the context of India, the teaching of English is quite challenging as it offers a teacher plethora of opportunities to apply modern means of communication in order to cater to growing requirements of learners and improve their language skills. There is no doubt that technology is changing the learning environment and teaching experience as well. Mobile devices are gaining immense popularity among masses as these devices are small, smart, portable, and comfortable to utilize. Mobile devices cover cell phones, personal digital assistants, smart phones, tablets etc. All these devices can be used in language classrooms easily. Role of teachers is very imperative in integrating and implementing technology such as adopting mobile phones in English teaching. With Mobile Phones, students can easily access language learning materials and communicate to their teachers in spending no time. Use of Mobile phones is increasing by leaps and bounds. Mobile Phones are the most powerful, popular and fast medium of communication. Teachers of English can take advantage of all the great features and capabilities of mobile phones and students can learn English in an easier and more effective way. The present paper is an attempt to explore mobile phone technology that be incorporated in learning English language.

Keywords: Mobile, technology, interactive, learning, teaching, language.



MJAL 4:2 Summer 2012

ISSN 0974-8741

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

Introduction

Trifonova and Ronchetti (2003) state that mobile learning is IT enabled learning through mobile devices. Generally speaking, by mobile technology we mean all mobile devices that include Personal Digital Assisstance (PDA), digital cell phones and IPOD. These devices are small and self-effacing enough as to use them in our mundane affairs of life and at the same time can be used for some form of learning. They can be very helpful and useful for us in many different ways. For example, they allow interaction with people, via voice and through the exchange of written messages, still and moving images. Further to this, they are good tools for assessing content, which can be stored locally on the device or can be reached through interconnection.

Historical Background

Over the years, a tremendous growth has been witnessed in the use of mobile phones. Mobile devices are performing all the essential functions as do personal computers. Mobile Learning has rapidly developed in the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), and other European countries while ML is still at its nascent stage in India.

Twarog and Pereszlenyi-Pinter (1988) used telephones to facilitate distant language learners with feedback and assistance. In 1996, instructors at Brigham Young University-Hawaii taught a distance-learning English course from Hawaii to Tonga via telephone and computer (Green, Collier, & Evans, 2001). And Dickey (2001) organized teleconferencing to teach an English conversation course in South Korea. One of the first projects using mobile phones in language learning was developed by the Stanford Learning Lab, which explored their use in language learning (Brown, 2001). Thornton and Houser (2002; 2003; 2005) also developed several innovative projects using mobile phones to teach English at a Japanese university. They report that young Japanese learners prefer to use mobile phones for many activities, from emailing to reading books. Another program by and Houser (2003) utilized a classroom polling system, EduCALL (inspired by EduClick), to survey students during class in order to determine vocabulary retention.



MJAL 4:2 Summer 2012

ISSN 0974-8741

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

Literature Review

Gilgen (2004) has demonstrated the possibilities of developing mobile labs for schools with limited funding. Kiernan and Aizawa (2004) set out to study whether or not mobile phones were useful language learning tools and to explore their use in task-based learning. Several other free and commercial mobile language learning programs have recently become available. Attewell (2004) remarks that mobile phone help to remove some of the formality from the learning experience and engage reluctant learners. Besides, it helps learners to remain more focused for longer periods. Ultimately; it helps to raise self – esteem and self- confidence.

Levy and Kennedy (2005) created a similar program for Italian learners in Australia, sending vocabulary words and idioms, definitions, and example sentences via SMS. The BBC World Service’s Learning English section offers English lessons via SMS in Francophone West Africa and China (Godwin-Jones, 2005).

Mcneal and Hooft (2006) find that the mobile phones have not been used widely in educational settings as some people feel reluctant. Chen, Hsieh, and Kinshuk (2008) carry a research on the use of mobile phones for the delivery of vocabulary materials to English learners in Taiwan. Their study reveals that students enjoy using their phones because of easy access to materials and the ability to practice anytime and anywhere; in addition, some students like the screen size limitations, which make the amount of content more manageable than that of other teaching materials. Janelle Wills (2010) highlighted advantages the app provided in terms of allowing students 24-hour access to learning materials as well as teacher feedback and the opportunity to access results or submit work outside of the classroom.

Objectives of M-Learning

- to enhance student motivation through the use of familiar technology.
- to increase student use of the four skills- reading, writing, speaking and listening- in English language.
- to enable students to become more competent in English language.



Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

- to foster the use of English language for communication.
- to facilitate the learning process as students have the possibility to explore, analyze, discover, choose activities which are real and meaningful.
- to enhance interaction between real and virtual environments.
- to promote self learning, learning by fun and learner centred approach.

Salient Features of Mobile Phones: Useful for language learning

Mostly mobile phones are equipped with functionalities including SMS, MMS, Facebook, Twitter, internet access, mp3/mp4 player, digital camera, video recorder and many are Flash-enabled and/or Java-enabled and can run multimedia contents including audio and video. Some mobiles have special inbuilt learning software such as e-dictionary, flash card software, quiz software and others.

Voice Recording and Listening: Effective telephonic communication is a vital key to attain success in this highly competitive world. Through recording facility learners can be asked to record their communication and later on they may be asked listen and improve their weak areas. Mp3/Mp4 is also very helpful in playing audio/video clips pertaining to English instructions. Students can record interviews or conversations they engage in outside the classroom. Students can play the interviews and conversations in class for feedback and discussion. Most phones include a memo recording feature that can collect language samples from TV or radio.

SMS (Short Message Service): A study conducted by Thornton and Houser (2003) highlights that Short Message Service (SMS) text messages can be used to send out vocabulary items at spaced intervals, thus increasing student retention. In circular writing, students can frame a story together by contributing one text message at a time. Each student writes a sentence or two and then sends this on to the next student, who adds another message, and so on until the story is finish. The teacher has to keep a record of the story as it emerges. In addition to all these user friendly services, mobile phones can be the best source for promoting and developing a better understanding



MJAL 4:2 Summer 2012

ISSN 0974-8741

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

Internet Facility: Browsing on internet with cell phones is one of the very convenient ways for students to surf online. They can use browsers to check e-mails, read instructional materials, such as online textbooks, and watch lectures from anywhere and at anytime. The Japanese wireless service provider offers 150 books on its site, known as ‘Bunko Yomihodai,’ which means ‘All You Can Read Paperbacks.’”

Downloading: People can download various kinds of materials they like to their cell phones easily. There are more free online material for users to download such as e-books, music, instructional materials, and the like. People can enjoy their downloaded music on their cell phones rather than having an MP3 player. Students can download their required e-books and read them whenever they have time without carrying the heavy books. People even download useful software and dictionaries. If teachers and students are in the same area, they can also share files through Bluetooth. Both teachers and students can store reading materials such as the passages and articles from their textbooks or keep the listening materials downloaded from other places.

Camera: Proper use of the camera on the cell phone is of vital importance. Students will greatly benefit from having a camera on the cell phones when collecting scientific data, documenting information, and storing visual material. Students can take pictures of English text by using the Camera feature on their mobile phones. They can then make a collage of the images or upload the pictures to a shared account.

Gaming: Games offer learners a good way to relax and learners can also be benefited a lot from playing games such as developing problem solving and critical thinking skills.

Mobile Phone Driven Class Room Activities

Students can select a wide range of topics to with their mobile phones. To begin, they can get ideas from many popular programs on television, including talk shows, game shows, news specials, and parodies. Following are model activities that can be expanded or reduced to cater to the requirements of semester length, class size, language level, and age group.



MJAL 4:2 Summer 2012

ISSN 0974-8741

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

Activity I

A teacher can use mobile phone to record a student speaking about a topic or a role play between two students. Then, play the recording and see if students can rectify their mistakes. Play back a second time for to show them the mistakes they didn't identify. Learners are asked to record interviews or conversations using their mobile devices.

Activity II

A teacher can film his/her students with mobile phone camera. Students may be participating in a role play or discussion. A teacher can save this video till the last day of class. He/she may ask them to have a similar role play or ask the very same discussion topic.

Activity III

A teacher can take pictures with mobile phone of important spots/points in town. He/she can ask students if they can identify them. They must name the exact spot and if possible famous landmarks that are nearby. A teacher can show students that they can do exactly the same when they are in a foreign location and take pictures of key streets and locations.

Participation of Teachers and Students

M-learning poses a great challenge for students and teachers. The possibility of using mobiles in education has rapidly grown since the last decades along with other technological tools. Role of teachers is very imperative in integrating and implementing technology such as adopting mobile phones in English teaching. At the outset, English teachers should become acquainted with the latest IT driven technology and obtain essential skills toward applying technology in their daily teaching assignments. Teachers also need to motivate the students to learn technology in class. With the judicious use of mobile technology, the teachers can better facilitate English teaching and can enable the students to understand English language in an effective manner. Learning happens at any time of the day, on working days or weekends. The learning practice is thus "mobile" with regard to location, and time.



Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

On the other hand, Students need to develop basic computer literacy and actively take part in learning technologies. They should also be trained and groomed towards learning all the options while using their mobile phones. M-learning can improve learning by putting students in a real context and transform the process of learning more appealing, motivating, interesting. Students may maximize their acquisition of skills, competencies, may optimize their time of studying. With proper guidance students can access online English learning resources via cell phones, and they can also take online tests. Students should be provided adequate information to store educational materials such as listening materials or books in their mobile phones.

Advantages and Limitations of M-Learning

The large number of users is prompting the teachers of English Language to use mobile phone technology in English class rooms. Mobile devices are very small, smart, portable and comfortable to use. A majority of students and teachers has access to mobile phones. Learning happens at any time of the day, on working days or weekends. The learning practice is thus “mobile” with regard to location, time and also topic area and as a consequence technological tools in support of learning should be mobile, too. However, people use mobiles as a mean of communication or recreational gadget and there is little awareness among the users to use mobiles for the purpose of learning and studying. Following are the advantages and limitations of M-learning as:

Advantages

- Personalizing learners’ environment.
- Providing learning experience outside the classroom.
- Making learning process of learning enjoyable by recording, organizing over time
- Minting benefits of an informal learning.
- Helping in boosting the morale of the learners.
- No more forced to use PC as the only object to have access to materials, knowledge.



MJAL 4:2 Summer 2012

ISSN 0974-8741

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

Limitations

- Small screen size
- Limited memory size
- Small keyboards
- Limited battery life
- High costs
- Possibility for mobile devices to be misplaced or stolen or corrupted
- Difficulty to use mobile devices in noisy environments
- Communication failure due to poor network connectivity

Conclusions and Suggestions

Mobile learning can be a potential alternative to the PC/laptop which is not always within reach; the mobile can be used conveniently to enrich knowledge bank and update the information bank of the students and encourage them to communicate in a foreign language. But there are experts who find mobile phone as a source of irritation, delinquency and even crime. Even some researchers reveal that children should not be given cell phones because “they don’t contribute to learning”. Also, “using mobiles in the classroom would end up causing more distractions” and they just “interrupt teaching”

On the contrary, it is a proven fact that mobile phones can contribute to the field of learning in various ways. Mobile companies should seek the suggestions from language experts to update their cell phones and programmers, technologists and develop suitable software or applications for teachers and students to use. Mobile phones could be produced with additional features for students to store information and learning stuff. Teachers and students will also expect to obtain an alternative solution for the limited screen size and the lack of a keyboard. Mobile phone games may be an enjoyable experience for students. With the support and help of language



MJAL 4:2 Summer 2012

ISSN 0974-8741

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

experts' instructional programs can be converted to games. Games, such as word shooting, would be very meaningful to the learners because they can learn words while playing games.

Mobile technology has significantly contributed in the arena of learning. First, mobile learning enables students to enhance their literacy skills and to recognize their abilities. Second, it can be used to enhance both independent and collaborative learning experiences. Mobile learning enables the students to upgrade their literacy and numeracy skills and to identify their existing abilities. It promotes both independent and collaborative learning experiences. It also enables learners to work upon their hard spots and improve their weak areas. Undoubtedly, moderate use of mobile phones may bring interest among the learners and transform the learning process as it helps learners to raise their self – esteem and self- confidence.

References

Attewell, J. (2004). Mobile Technologies and Learning. A technology update and m-learning project summary. Published by the Learning and Skills Development Agency. Retrieved January 12, 2011 from <http://www.m-learning.org/docs/>.

Brown, E. (Ed.) (2001, January 8). Mobile learning explorations at the Stanford Learning Lab. Speaking of Computers, 55. Stanford, CA: Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University. Retrieved December 24, 2011, from <http://sll.stanford.edu/>

Chen, N. S., S. W. Hsieh and Kinshuk. 2008. Effects of short-term memory and content representation type on mobile language learning. Language Learning and Technology 12 (3): 93–113.

Gilgen, R.G. (2004, April 22). Creating a mobile language learning environment. PowerPoint Presentation presented at the Educause Midwest Regional Conference, Chicago, IL. Retrieved December 26, 2011, from <http://www.educause.edu/>



MJAL 4:2 Summer 2012

ISSN 0974-8741

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

Godwin-Jones, R. (2005, January). Messaging, gaming, peer-to-peer sharing: Language learning strategies and tools for the millennial generation. *Language Learning & Technology*, 9(1), 17-22. Retrieved January 15, 2011, from <http://llt.msu.edu/vol9num1/emerging/default.html>

Green, B.A., Collier, K.J., & Evans, N. (2001). Teaching tomorrow's class today: English by telephone and computer from Hawaii to Tonga. In L.E. Henrichsen (Ed.), *Distance-learning programs* (pp. 71-82).

James E, KatZ, (n.d) Mobile Phone in Educational Settings. Retrieved January 20, 2011 from <http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/>

Chen, N. S., S. W. Hsieh, and Kinshuk. 2008. Effects of short-term memory and content representation type on mobile language learning. *Language Learning and Technology* 12 (3): 93–113.

Kiernan, P.J., & Aizawa, K. (2004). Cell phones in task based learning: Are cell phones useful language learning tools? *ReCALL*, 16(1), 71-84.

Levy, M., & Kennedy, C. (2005). Learning Italian via mobile SMS. In A. Kukulska-Hulme & J. Traxler (Eds.), *Mobile Learning: A Handbook for Educators and Trainers*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Thornton, P., & Houser, C. (2002). M-learning in transit. In P. Lewis (Ed.), *The changing face of CALL* (pp. 229-243). Lisse, The Netherlands: Swets and Zeitlinger.

Thornton, P., & Houser, C. (2003). Using mobile web and video phones in English language teaching: Projects with Japanese college students. In B. Morrison, C. Green, & G. Motteram



MJAL 4:2 Summer 2012

ISSN 0974-8741

Mobile Phone Technology in English Teaching: Causes & Concerns by Naveen K Mehta

(Eds.), *Directions in CALL: Experience, experiments & evaluation* (pp. 207-224). Hong Kong: English Language Centre, Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Thornton, P., & Houser, C. (2005). Using mobile phones in English Education in Japan. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 21, 217-228.

Thomas McNeal and Mark van't Hooft (2006). Anywhere, anytime: Using mobile phones for learning. *Journal of the Research Center for Educational Technology*. Vol. 2, No. 2

Twarog, L., & Pereszlenyi-Pinter, M. (1988). Telephone-assisted language study and Ohio University: A report. *The Modern Language Journal*, 72, 426-434.

Wills Janelle (2010) *The Queensland Times*. Retrieved on January 30, 2011 from <http://www.learnosity.com/>