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VOCABULARY BUILDING TECHNIQUES THROUGH MALL

(MOBILE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING)

Abstract

The methodologies for teaching and learning English language have been changed by the use of Modern Technology. It has an important part in the lives of teachers and students in this era who use English as a special language. There are different kinds of learning technologies like Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Web Assisted Language Learning (WALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Among these technologies MALL plays a vital role in the field of English language teaching and learning, since mobile phone is a device that we can carry in our pockets and also it can connect us to a variety of information sources wherever we go. This paper investigates the applications of

MALL and the influence of various mobile devices on developing English vocabulary. Vocabulary learning software in mobile devices can be used to add new words to our word bank. The study examines, to what extent the language learners agree to use mobile devices to learn English in general and to build their English vocabulary power. In addition, it tries to find whether they can use MALL to facilitate their English language acquisition and also discusses its merits and demerits. The learners can find interest in using MALL as a modern technology inside and outside the classroom for acquiring English language and to empower their vocabulary.

Keywords: Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), English Language learning, English vocabulary, Mobile devices.

INTRODUCTION

Most of the people are interested in learning a new language whenever they get an opportunity to learn. English is a language which is used for special purpose by the non native speakers. In this scenario we must acquire the language by using various techniques. The first step for acquiring a new language is learning new vocabulary. For building a good vocabulary power, one should practise the newly learned words in his/her day to day life. As technology is growing rapidly, it is expected that mobile devices, which has two main characteristics such as portability and connectivity, become accessible for most people in the world. Recently, people usually use mobile phones and tablets for different purposes. Hence these devices can make the language learning more effective and enjoyable. Mobile devices such as mobile phones, MP3 or MP4 players and tablet computers can help the learners as well as the teachers to facilitate teaching and learning process. This paper focuses on the study of MALL as a language teaching and learning methodology.

LITERARY REVIEW

The use of the mobile technologies, such as mobiles phones, MP3 /MP4 players, iPods, laptops and computers highly support students' language learning. MALL language learners would be easily able to access language learning materials, and to communicate with their teachers and peers, at anytime anywhere. MALL is available through a lot of electronic devices such as mobiles phones, MP3 /MP4 players, iPods, laptops and computers. Many learners use MALL as their learning mode in the present era. MALL designers have begun to change the method of merely copying the traditions of standard non-mobile language learning

and are implementing techniques that make best use of the benefits of these new devices. The increasing number of possible delivery tools has generated a wide-range of mobile language learning programs in short and long term periods. The number of people capable of producing MALL content is also on the rise, due to a combination of increased popularity and demand of content generation tools that simplify the programming process through the use of templates and examples. According to Nah, et. al. (2008), among the most noted affordances for MALL is ubiquitous access to learning anytime at any place that the user has reception. Compared to classroom learning, the learner does not need to sit in a particular place or at a computer to access learning materials. This enables users to brush up on language skills just before or just after a conversation in the language they are learning. This is an easy method of acquiring language proficiency. Learning English vocabulary and improving students' performance have been dealt with throughout the history of language teaching (West, 1953; Garins, 1986; Carter, 1987; Nation, 1990,...). From this we can assume that the development of MALL can be very helpful in the vocabulary learning process. Thornton and Houser (2002; 2003; 2005) developed several innovative projects using mobile phones to teach English language in a Japanese University. They focused on developing vocabulary by the use of SMS. They also emailed short lessons to the students sent in discrete chunks. Students were tested periodically and were compared with the peer groups. The results indicated that the SMS students learned more number of vocabulary words as the Web students, and that SMS students improved their marks by nearly twice as much as students who had received their lessons on paper. Attitude of the students were also measured. The majority preferred the SMS instruction and they wished to continue such lessons. They believed it to be a valuable teaching method. Students should be given a chance to concentrate on the critical elements independently or cooperatively using variation models (Bowden & Marton, 1998). Levy and Kennedy (2005) created a similar program for Italian learners in Australia, sending vocabulary words and idioms, definitions, and example sentences via SMS in a spaced and scheduled pattern of delivery, and requesting feedback in the form of quizzes. This study is to examine the effectiveness of MALL in developing one's vocabulary without facing any social issues.

SIGNIFICANCE OF VOCABULARY

A learner with diverse vocabulary can connect with a greater variety of people in their particular areas of interest (Lightbown & Spada, 1993) and become proactive in talking and dealing with issues in detail. An apparent vocabulary gives them confidence and ability to

voice their opinion clearly, share ideas and thoughts. This increases the chances of having other people understand what is expressed by the speaker. Learners would be able to grasp ideas and think more rationally, perceptively, and become more informed and involved by possessing vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary knowledge refers to the size of the vocabulary, which includes spelling, pronunciation, syntax, morphology, context, whether it has multiple meanings, and how a word combines with other words (Qian, 1999). The process of attaining a good vocabulary power begins with a new word, then it is enriched with other related words; in other words, it is a cumulative process. Eventually, the learners' vocabulary knowledge becomes more conventional, and they are able to see how words are related each other. Nation and Newton (2009, p. 135) suggested that teaching vocabulary to beginners is more effective if words are pre-taught before they are used in context, and words are explained in the context of listening to a story compared to incidental learning without directly focused attention. Nation and Newton also suggested various ways to teach learners based on their proficiency levels: beginners, intermediate, and advanced. Vocabulary learning is very important to attaining conversational language proficiency. This could be achieved by way of developing the word power. A greater number of words in a learner's word bank provide more instruments to work with when putting forward their own ideas and dissecting and examining the ideas of others (J. Ahmad, 2011; Elgort, 2011). These instruments are also useful for reading comprehension, where readers could try and comprehend unfamiliar words that they encounter in the text (Krashen & Terrell, 2000; Lightbown & Spada, 1993).

MOBILE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Mobile Assisted Language learning offers the capability of taking learning into the real-world environment, thus enhancing the learning outside the classroom with real-world language practices. The basic communication skills are Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills. Students can practice all these four language skills with the support of mobile devices that is convenient and easily accessible. One of the most vital aspects of mobile-assisted language learning is the positioned language practice since when students are able to practice the authentic language embedded in real language situations. But they should be careful in balancing the combination of in class practice with the real-world practice, as well as the individual learning with collaborative learning activities. A variety of language assessment tools and games are available in mobile devices, as well as, all sorts of group language activities can be communicated through mobile devices that students have in their pockets all the time. Another important benefit of mobile language learning is the possibility

to rehearse and practice in a less threatening environment where students, for example, get to record their speech samples as many times as they need before they send it to their experts for evaluation. So we can say that this is completely a type of learner centered language learning.

Some of the most popular mobile-assisted language tools would include: Email, Web browser, Audio/ video player, Voice recorders, Note-taking tools, SMS and texting capabilities and also GPS and other location aware capabilities of our mobile devices. An audio/ video player can be used for language podcasts, listening to audios and watching YouTube videos for the sake of practice. Voice recorders can help students to practice and record multiple examples of their own verbal communication and also other people's; and record speech samples for feedback and exchange them. Similarly, with a mobile camera, students can capture communicative situations and then analyze them and work with them. They can also create their own role plays and small skits which help to improve their critical thinking.

METHODOLOGY

Various studies about MALL have come out of different methodologies for the application of the learning technology. Among these methodologies, there were two important research instruments that have been used for conducting the study. The first instrument was a questionnaire that was distributed to all the students who were learning the language. In order to study the students' motivation and perceptions towards MALL, the researcher has adopted this instrument. The instrument was used to evaluate MALL's perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Ducey, 2013) with some changes made to suit the study.

The other research instrument was the method of pre-test and post-test. These tests consist of various error identification and correction questions that should be attended by each student. The error may be in tenses, spelling or punctuations. The students must identify the error in the sentences and they should correct those errors. It is also possible that the non-threatening environment of gaming helps students to feel more at ease with their lessons and help them to acquire better input and hence perform better in the pre test and the post test.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MOBILE ASSISTED LEARNING

From the above study, it is clear that Mobile Assisted Language learning is an innovative method of learning language and it has a vital role in promoting the interest of

learning among the students. These types of learning create a non classroom environment when they are out of the classroom online or offline. They are able to learn when they are traveling by bus or train, or at work doing their part time job. In the nutshell, they can learn at anytime, anywhere. The advantages of mobile based language learning are derived from the two main characteristics of mobile devices: portability and connectivity. As for connectivity, designing the mobile system must have capability of being connected and communicated with the learning website using the wireless network of the device to access learning material ubiquitously including short message service (SMS) and e-mail. Because of its portability, learners are able to move mobile devices to collect the materials. It can be taken from one place to another very easily. Exchanging materials and notes among peer learners are also possible through mobile devices using social media.

At the same time, there are some disadvantages or limitations in the mobile assisted language learning. In one way, it is difficult to use the mobile devices for educational purposes since most of the mobile phones are not designed for this purpose. This is partly due to the initial design of such devices, and partly due to non-existence of such developed mobile phones. However, those devices which are appropriate for specific learning tasks are too expensive for most of the learners to buy. Thus, teachers should be aware of what kinds of tools learners have, and then set to chose or adapt resources compatible to such tools. Other disadvantages include small screen size, limited presentation of graphics (Albers & Kim, 2001).

CONCLUSION

Mobile based language learning has its own advantages and restrictions. There is a tendency in implementing mobile solutions, both broadly and close by, to sometimes uncritically focus on technology merits. Among the advantages of technology in language learning that are particularly relevant to mobile environments are their accessibility, authenticity, and situated learning. However, these affordances are accompanied by challenges and limitations. For example, while mobile learning allows anytime anywhere access, the learning experience on mobile devices may be degraded by a number of factors such as limited screen size and the often distracting environments in which they are used. Crucially, if the fundamental goal is language learning, then these affordances and limitations should be directly connected in a principled way to second language learning research and

theory (Chapelle, 2001; Doughty & Long, 2003).

As a whole, the techniques used in MALL can definitely serve as a useful, handy and relatively cheap tool for learning language in an easy way. Effective teaching and learning methodologies are essentials for the success of English Language Vocabulary learning. These technologies can help strengthening the teaching learning process. Interactive learning through technology promotes flexible learners that can develop learning at learners' own pace. As educators we have obligations to lead and supervise learners to progress in their learning stages and personal development, not only to succeed in exams but also and above all, for the challenging life.

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