

Effectiveness of Mobile Assisted Language Learning In Developing the Four Skills

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ABSTRACT: Technology has changed our lives forever. The successful changes brought out by Technology can be seen vividly in our education system too. The purpose of education has been redefined. At present, the focus is on skill based education. We are in the age of Flipped classrooms and Blended learning. English is learnt as a Second language or as a foreign language in most of the places. Learning a foreign language poses many difficulties- both for the teacher and the student. English language teaching focuses on the development of the four skills-Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Computer Assisted Language Learning comes as a saviour, making the language learning more effective. Mobile phones have become an inevitable part of our lives. The complaint is that the Youngsters are addicted to mobile phones. But, Educationists have found new possibilities in the field to make the youngsters use of the new technology to learn better. Mobile technology combined with Task Based Language Learning, the goal of developing the four skills can be achieved in an English Language classroom at the Tertiary Level. The paper projects mobile phone as a learning tool for the development of language skills and, tries to establish the effectiveness of Mobile Assisted Learning to develop the four skills at the tertiary level. The challenges during the Mobile Assisted Learning are also explored.

Key words: Language Skills, Mobile phone, technology, tertiary level, flipped classroom, challenges

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I. INTRODUCTION

English is the language of the world. The importance of learning English cannot be neglected in this era of globalization. Communication plays a very important role in this world of commerce and trade. Globally, being accepted as the International Language, English is learnt as the Second language or foreign language. English language is in high demand in all fields of life. The advancement in trade, International Business, Science and Technology show a dramatic interest in learning the International Language. English is known as the language of the Corporate, of the Digital World, Of the Technology, of the Knowledge and Education. This impact is vividly seen in the educational field too and, learning of English at the tertiary level has become a necessity.

English language Teaching and learning has a long past history in India. The multi lingual culture of India gives the foreign language learning a new flavour. English is either learnt as a second language or as a foreign language. It is the most popular choice as the second language in most of the countries. Various approaches and methods are used to make English understandable. But, from time immemorial, we see the challenges faced by the teachers and learners in the ESL class room. New strategies and methodologies are introduced to make the learners proficient in English. "Proficiency in English" means to be good at all the four skills – Listening, Speaking, Writing and Reading. These skills should be acquired than learnt. So, the learning in an English class has to be fun filled. It is the duty of the teachers to ensure instilling interest in the students towards learning the language. The students may be from various backgrounds or strata of life. Teachers should realize this and find new strategies and methodologies to stimulate interest and enhance the academic learning of the students. The task is on these teaching practitioners to make the foreign language absorbable to the native crowd. The era of technology has designed many methods to make English classes more effective. The latest ones are the Task based language teaching (TBLT), Communicative Approach, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). The present paper tries to introduce the new methodology, the Mobile Assisted Language Learning and also tries to find the effectiveness of the new technology in the development of LSRW skills.

There are different kinds of approaches and methods to English language teaching. The Grammar Translation method is the oldest. Later, we had the Direct Method, Situational approach, Communicative

approach, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and the Task Based Approach. Most of these were relevant during different times. And, it is to be noted that just as a classroom could have variety of learners, so could be the methods to teach a language. One method may not suit every one. From the beginning, to the present era, we can see a paradigm shift in the approach. The classes are no more teachers centric. Learner centred activities and methods have gained momentum. Globalization has brought technology into our hands. This has pushed the Communicative Approach and Task Based Approach to the forefront now. According to Rajval and Devi (2011), the challenge for the English teachers now, is to be Techno- Teachers. It is a challenge to bring the dynamic world in to the classroom activities. It is necessary to embrace the technological phase to bring in new English learning styles. Cohen and Cowen (2008) expresses that the new trends in technology has given new shades to literacy, like digital literacy. Teachers should not oversee this phase of the development. Multimedia plays a very important role in English language classrooms. Multimedia has many connotations. Some are of the opinion that it is a combination of text and visuals and so, could be used in language classrooms. The British Council notes that the availability of multimedia computers was a breakthrough in using videos, music and animation in the classroom to develop the listening, speaking, writing and the reading. According to Nunan and Newton (2009), if listening skill is developed in the students, then, understanding the concept happens automatically. This in turn will give them the confidence to speak. Thus, the previous studies tell that ESL of EFL classes will be more effective if the interests of the students are triggered. They also reveal that the classes have to be remodelled to the changing times of technology. This need has taken the form of Flipped Classrooms and Blended Classrooms. The concept of Mobile Assisted Language Learning is also a part of remodelling the existing educational system.

What is MALL?

MALL is Mobile Assisted Language Learning which is a hybrid version of M Learning and Computer Assisted Language Learning, MALL classrooms are sure to be more dynamic than the traditional classrooms. Educationists have a different connotation for the word MOBILE in MALL. According to Kukulska- Hume and Traxler, mobile could be any portable, lightweight device that could be handy for the learner. It could be smart phones, PDA, Tablet PC, laptop computers, personal media players or cameras. MALL could also be explained as an Approach to language learning that is assisted or enhanced through the use of handheld gadgets.

Enhancing the Language Skills through Mall

Listening is considered to be the base to develop all the other language skills. Learners listen to what they enjoy. They listen to collect specific information. They listen to understand a concept. But they lose confidence in a language if they are not able to understand the matter spoken. This could happen if the matter is spoken fast. This could create stress and worry in the learners due to which the chances are more for them to neglect the language itself. Tasks designed using MALL could come as a solution. The matter shared by the teacher could be listened to at the learners' pace. They could pause and revamp too. This gives them a motivation to listen to more. There lies the success of the teacher.

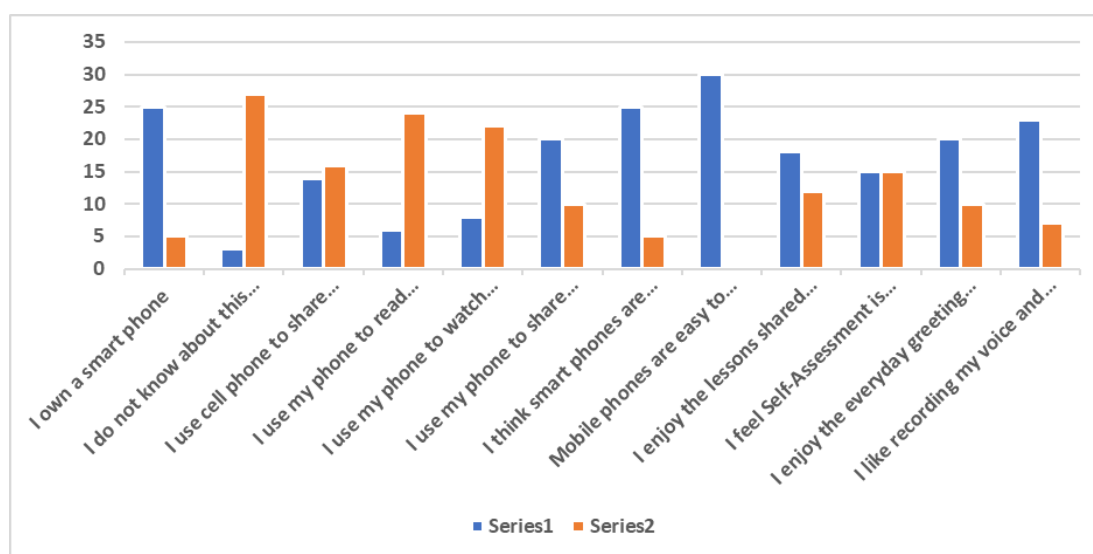
Listening leads to speaking. This is also interesting using MALL. The young learners want to be heard. But, English, being a foreign language, learners feel shy to make mistakes. Sharing a content to their mobile devices and instructing them to video graph their talk about it could help them a long way. They could send the audio or video personally to check the pronunciation, accent, intonation, etc. They could do that even by themselves. This helps them in self-awareness and assessment.

Listening and Speaking are the neglected skills in the present education system. They are the foundation skills for Reading and Writing. If the students are confident in speaking and listening, then, reading and writing could develop easily. The role of MALL in enhancing reading cannot be neglected. This gives the learners the freedom to read the content in the font size of their choice. They could read it at their pace and check for meanings whenever they wish. There are many sites that provide reading materials. More reading will lead to enhancement of vocabulary. This in turn will lead to better writing. MALL could come in picture to enhance writing skills too. Blog writing and diary writing are highly recommended now. These not only help the students enhance their language, it also helps in their networking, for which communication plays a major role. Educational apps, E books, E libraries, Social Media, Audio, Video, Picture, interviews, could be used in MALL.

To know the preference of the learners towards the new way of learning, the following questionnaire was given to a group of 30 B Com students of the same class.

The survey showed the following responses

QUESTIONS	YES	NO
I own a smart phone with internet facility	25	5
I do not know about this technology	3	27
I use cell phone to share notes with my classmates	14	16
I use my phone to read newspaper	6	24
I use my phone to watch movie	8	22
I use my phone to share videos with my friends	20	10
I think smart phones are useful for language learning	25	5
Mobile phones are easy to handle	30	0
I enjoy the lessons shared through media	18	12
I feel Self-Assessment is easy using MALL	15	15
I enjoy the everyday greeting messages	20	10
I like recording my voice and listening to it later	23	7



Series 1 is the response YES and Series 2 is the response NO

The chart shows that majority of the semi rural students at the tertiary level enjoy using a smart phone (an example for technology). This preference could be made to a learning spirit. This could be tapped to enhance the language skills.

Role of the Learners and Teacher in Mall

Teachers of English language should realize that the classroom environment should be communicative and interactive. The tasks created by the teacher will be at the disposal and control of the teacher herself. The content should be as per the interest of the learners. Teacher should be a guide and content creator. The content is to be real life situations which is sure to bring curiosity in the learners. Corrections have to be made by making the learners realize their own errors. The class is learner centric. But both teacher and learners are active and there is no way for monotony.

II. CONCLUSION

Technology has become the most important part of our lives. It has changed the structure of our teaching and learning process. It has brought in the concept that education need not be restricted to the classroom. We have to change and adapt to the changing world. The interests and curiosity of the learners should be given priority and not the text book content alone. English teachers too have a great role to play to make the students use the technology for a better gain. Our students are tech savvy and wireless communication is the trend of the day. So, bringing the learner and the technology together, MALL can be of a great help.

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