

Conveniences and Complexities in the Domain of Mobile Assisted Language Learning at the Backdrop of Pandemic Situation

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Abstract

The process of language acquisition is getting modified according to the developments that are taking place in our society. It can be broadly divided into two segments, before & after the computer era. Technology is being exploited in various fields, including language imparting and acquisition methods. All the applications of computers are built into the smart phones. Presently, language acquisition is also done through a mobile phone, which has led to the concept of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). This paper focuses on effective use of mobiles in learning language. The role of mobile phones in delivering appropriate content and facilitating digital and virtual environments, including various apps, use of various tools in learning English and employability skills has also been described. The impact of culture, consisting of digitalisation, on students in general and the effect of COVID-19 necessitating the use of online classes in which MALL has a major role are focused on in the paper. The need of the hour to adopt technology for language learning has also been elaborated. In view of different levels of students, the conveniences and difficulties in adopting MALL have been deliberated.

Keywords: MALL, Apps, digital content, social media, gadgets.

1. Introduction

Mobile technologies enable the establishment of inventive learning settings and language issues that support and promote conversational linguistic competence in autonomous learning.

The literature survey was conducted to comprehend various stages of development in utilising computers and mobiles. Integrating MALL into curricula has no effect on a program's concepts or teaching aspects. Instead, a Mobile Assisted Language Learning curriculum will enhance students' ability to comprehend course material and give possibilities for outside-of-classroom participation in the course. MALL provides reading and writing benefits which can be used by the students to create and also utilize the materials on a electronic gadget that is easily available.

With reference to the unprecedented pandemic situation, education in general has taken various dimensions, resulting in a deterioration of standards in the offline system and the enhancement of new avenues in the online mode of teaching and learning. This is quite applicable for language learning.

MALL apps are currently meant to supplicate all learners who acquire knowledge through the sensory faculties fostering language internalisation. MALL provides all learners with an incredible variety of academic opportunities that extend beyond the constraints of conventional learning areas. MALL might be used efficiently beyond the classroom, and also in the classroom and in resource-poor environments. Mobile learning technology is better suited to activities that take place outside of the classroom. These activities allow learning to be more closely linked to real-world experiments. Yedla (2013) suggests there is a need to transform conventional classrooms into smart rooms. Furthermore, studying using cell phones beyond the classroom has edge of better utilising the learner's leisure time; even pupils on the journey can develop their study skills.

MALL breaks down classroom walls, enabling students to engage in more real-world learning activities, and grammar points. Students' preparedness for using mobiles for language acquisition is an important parameter in view of the rapid developments taking place in the field of digitalisation. Since then, it has become mandatory for all students to update themselves according to the developments.

2. The Use of Social Media for Learning via Mobile

Public Networking sites may expose the realistic content with all settings to the learners and on a platform of their choice, while allowing teachers to supervise studies and examine grammar.

The usage of social media applications such as WhatsApp messages in the language to be acquired will increase learner's linguistic correctness, however it may not improve the difficulty in forming sentences or appropriate vocabulary of that language. MMS is a more recent mobile texting programme that can transport various forms of information, including text, sound, photos, and video messages, in addition to the more widely used SMS.

The teacher can address problems in writing in a group environment using an instant messaging app like WhatsApp. Everyone in the social media group can observe and learn from the modifications made to address an error and this sort of error-correction is beneficial.

The feedback of the students of MALL indicates a definite improvement in their speaking abilities. As a result, it is advised that latest apps available in mobiles can be used in target language acquisition process to provide feedback and engage students in other learning activities.

Twitter is a wonderful tool for engaging students in learning grammar and vocabulary outside of the classroom, including tasks such as spotting grammar errors in authentic circumstances, messaging a phrase available in allocated feature such as word of the day, or taking an image of relevant terminology from situations of daily life.

When compared m-learning with easily usable apps like WhatsApp messaging as a learning source, it becomes more accessible to more learners, extending the option of availing mobiles outside the learning environment.

3. The Use of Gadget Based Games for Learning and its Impact

The effectiveness of technology embedded games, as well as its impact on students' vocabulary learning skills, was critical to this study. Teachers should facilitate students' use of mobile phones outside of the classroom for learning activities. Second language abilities such as vocabulary, articulation, grammar, listening and reading comprehension, and spelling can all be taught via m-learning games. Because they are ubiquitous, affordable, tiny, and wireless, cell phones are a perfect platform for learning.

When facilitated by mobile technology, game-based learning exercises can greatly increase students' speaking skills. Further, it can be stated that acquiring knowledge using a mobile system encourages learners to:

- (1) Practise speaking English as a non-native language effectively.
- (2) Frame English sentences and speak English appropriately and confidently
- (3) Perform speaking activity of English sentences choosing from a real-world situation. Listening and speaking abilities can be enhanced in a gadget -based conducive learning circumstances.

Interactive games such as jigsaws and card game will enable students practise in a realistic setting to improve their confidence. Such games can be played on mobile phones.

4. Learning Vocabulary through MALL

Effects of a Mobile Game-Based English Vocabulary Learning APP on Learners' Perceptions and Learning Performance:

While utilising the Mobile technologies, people realise the potential of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). MALL can help students improve their capability of memorizing language and improve the comprehension levels. Lexical acquisition using mobile devices is a promising method for increasing learners' vocabulary capacity. Academic vocabulary can be strengthened through sending messages in mobiles. "The results indicated that, with the intervention, students learned significantly more target words." Li, J., & Cummins, J. (2019).

5. Learning Grammar through MALL

The Grammar Facility on the web allows students to fulfil grammar issues through exercises. Overall, Grammar Clinic is a favourable example of mobile-assisted language learning because it is a valuable learning application in an ESL writing class. The Grammar Services were viewed as effective in assisting learners to develop their metalinguistic awareness and improve their self-editing abilities in English writing.

Grammar exercises delivered to children via text messaging assist them. Text messages can be effective for learning grammatical points since they stimulate learners' interest and push them to study more in depth.

6. Advantages & Disadvantages of MALL

6.1. The Benefits

6.1.1 Versatility of Mobile Phone: The education for all programmes of the twenty-first century aims to provide high-quality education to everyone, everywhere through integrating technology into education. The major goal of technology is to advance and improve classroom education, particularly group instruction and self-learning. Bringing mobile phones into a language lesson can present a number of issues, including privacy problems, distraction, technological failures, training requirements, and increased inequality. Students can get answers faster, resolve conflicts faster, get feedback faster, and share information faster. Mobile learning can perhaps be defined as 'any educational provision where the sole or dominant technologies are handheld or palmtop devices'. (Traxler 2005)

Learners will be using phones anyway, so they should be given something meaningful to do while they're on the phone. Teachers should train students to use it outside of the classroom to learn. Mobile phones can do practically everything that computers can do. Hence, phones can be used effectively. They are fundamentally interactive unlike books, and interaction is an excellent way to learn languages. In today's digital world, students require digital and multimodal literacy skills, and mobile phones are an ideal tool for teaching these new literacy skills.

6.1.2 Multimodality: By establishing a shared network, mobile devices can be linked to other devices, data collection devices, or a common network; the phone has a camera, a voice recorder, a video recorder, a keypad, and a screen. Students engage in a variety of types and styles of communication. MALL provides chances for various types of participation. Learners can express themselves in whatever way they want. Learning can take place anywhere, at any time, for any length of time, and with practically anyone. MALL also encourages social connectedness by transforming a language that may appear distant into a living activity.

6.1.3 Mobility: As mobile is a handheld device, it brings the entire universe and all the potential educational opportunities into a learner's hands. It may hold students accountable because they record their input, engagement, production, and critical thinking. Current widespread ownership of mobile and wireless devices means that learners are increasingly in a position to take the lead and engage in activities motivated by their personal needs and circumstances of use, including those arising from greater mobility and travel (Kukulka-Hulme, Traxler & Pettit, 2007; Pettit & Kukulka - Hulme, 2007).

6.1.4 Flexibility: Mobile Assisted Language Learning makes learning Language much faster and easier. Anytime communication can be made between students and teachers. Irrespective of the place where they are, they can learn anywhere, anytime, leading to better course completion rates. Learners can use m-learning to learn whether on the bus, outside, or at work working part-time tasks.

6.2. Disadvantages

6.2.1 Technical glitches: Technical problems relevant to software and hardware can create obstructions to learning. Fluctuations in internet conditions will disturb the concentration and mood of learning.

6.2.2 Distractions: In view of the physical absence of the teacher in MALL sessions, there can be a lot of scope for disruption in the learning process.

6.2.3 Misuse by students: As students have a lot of autonomy and freedom while using mobile phones for MALL classes, there is a probability that the students will misuse the phones.

6.2.4 Students must incur the following additional costs: Students should have additional financial assistance to procure smart phones for the purpose of MALL sessions. Parents with poor financial backgrounds can't afford it.

7. Use of Apps for Mobile Learning

7.1 The Kahoot App: Kahoot is a game-based learning platform that makes it easy to create, share and play learning games or trivia quizzes in minutes. It is a tool for using technology to administer quizzes, discussions or surveys. It is a game based classroom response system played by the whole class in real time. Multiple-choice questions are projected on the screen. Students can answer the questions with their smart phones, tablets or computers. Kahoot is free to download with in-app purchases available.

Students must install the Kahoot App, which is a tool for developing multiple choice games that are presented on a large monitor and may be joined by participants using their own smart phones. The Kahoot app for laptops, Kahoot for Mac Books, and Kahoot for smart phones are all interchangeable and operate in the same way. Many teachers find Kahoot to be an effective technique of connecting the classroom and engaging their pupils in a good learning atmosphere. Thus Learning through mobile is more convenient when compared to the conventional way of learning in a classroom.

7.2 The TedexApp: This application comes with hundreds of hours of audio and video features from which students can listen to and view some of the best inputs from these speakers, in which they explain and develop their ideas so everyone else can obtain their point of view from various subjects.

7.3 The Farlex Dictionary App: One billion visitors is a testament to the breadth and quality of the information available on The Free Dictionary.com. It consists of the world's most comprehensive *free* online *dictionary*, thesaurus, and encyclopaedia with synonyms, definitions, idioms, abbreviations, medical jargon, Word of the Day, Daily grammar lesson, Article of the Day, This Day in History, quotation of the Day, match up, Spell Bee, Grammar Quiz, and word hub. All these items provide enormous amounts of information to the students.

7.4 The 21st Century Podcast App: Podcasts come alive with images and links paired with audio. Students should download the app and go to the top of the "discover" page to listen to and see podcasts with deeper, digital stories. However, **with Vodcast, students will not only listen; they will literally experience.** Students can record the lecture and upload it as a podcast. As Facer, Betty Rose and Abdous(2011) point out, "Instructors and learners do not need to worry about suffering from an insufficient hardware supply. Smartphone (Mobile) devices, iPods (with voice recorders) and MP3 recorders are handy tools for recording content for podcasts at any time (p. 74).

7.5 The Vodcasting APP: Vodcast is the new exciting app that provides podcast listeners deeper, digital stories with interactive podcasts.

7.5.1 The Benefits of Vodcasting: The major benefit of vodcasting is that **it provides video content on demand.** It is available when one wants it, as opposed to a television, where a programme can only be seen at a pre-determined time.

Practicing video programmes like Vodcast for in-class and out-of-class activities would help students grasp what they say and hear. They can produce a wide range of true & naturalistic expressions. By integrating visuals, words via highlighted subtitles, and sounds, video apps enable the students understand various aspects of grammar more effectively than regular DVDs.

7.6 Voice Recording App: Utilizing voice-recording applications such as WhatsApp, students' record speeches and build discourse provide a variety of affective emotional and social assistance for speaking/listening. These sorts of activities would boost inventiveness, diminish nervousness, build confidence, and improve reflection when speaking.

A mobile phone's recording feature may be utilised to allow pupils to practise their spoken grammar and then report on it. Mobile phones can play an important role in increasing students' speaking quality.

8. Future Scope of MALL

Computers have been reduced over the years in size. In other words mobiles are replacing computers for all purposes. The far and wide accessibility and utilization of such gadgets has prompted the abbreviation Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which differs from CALL in its use of personal, portable devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasising continuity or spontaneity of access across different contexts of use.

Future MALL development and integration into a broader language-learning framework must take into account users' different innovative and social foundations. Since one size doesn't fit all, creating measures to tailor the MALL experience is encouraged.

9. Conclusion

The feedback from students regarding the learning levels acquired from MALL sessions is highly positive. Social media can be used as a platform to improve language learning skills. Students possessing smart phones can implement this effectively.

Language learners of all ages can benefit from the use of mobile devices, i.e. tablets and handheld MP3 players. Technology has the potential to enhance and develop oral language output among the youth. The importance of discourse and social engagement among young language learners should be highlighted. Computerized innovation's abilities add to the development of imaginative learning settings and certifiable language learning encounters that help and advance oral language yield among youthful language students. MALL facilitates a plethora of advantages, while it gives scope for some drawbacks and lacunae in the learning process. In view of the accessibility of various advanced mobile applications, students will have tremendous horizons for learning.

Further, awareness of the pros and cons of online education, in which mobile phones have been a major device for acquiring language effectively, is a need of the hour. Effective adoption of MALL will increase the chances of gaining employability.

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