

ML for EFL: Rationale for Mobile Learning

Manal Almarwani

University of Lincoln (United Kingdom)

m_almarwani@hotmail.com

Abstract

Higher education institutions across the globe are investing much into developing and applying ICT to improve teaching and learning to cope with students' needs in the newly emerging knowledge economy and information society.

In Saudi Arabia, global economic competition has had a major impact on the development of large scale ICT educational projects. The Ministry of Higher Education launched a national project, "AAFAQ", to develop a comprehensive long-term plan for university education, to address the current and the future challenges. This project has encouraged the implementation of e-learning and distance education. Therefore, there is no doubt that e-learning with its all forms can promote the learning process in a way that encourages a pedagogic shift from a teacher-centric model to a learner-centric model.

English is both a global language, and the language of academic discourse. Consequently, EFL teaching and learning is becoming more and more necessary and popular in universities in Saudi Arabia. However, EFL instruction at university level is not able to cope with the growing numbers of students who need English to study and also to operate as global citizens. Consequently, initiatives need to be implemented to improve the current situation.

Many studies are being conducted in the developed countries to theorize, develop, deliver, and evaluate mobile learning. Although such studies have generic utility, their usefulness is limited in the unique circumstances which are found in Saudi Arabia. Mobile learning in Higher Education in Saudi Arabia is a response to:

Current and future challenges.

Severe limitations in both capital and labour.

Very large geographical distances.

Traditional cultural norms.

This paper will explore the unique challenges of using mobile learning for EFL teaching in a country which is undergoing rapid economic and technological development while still trying to maintain the customs and cultural norms of a traditional Islamic society.