



Smart Phone Application: A Superior Tool to Learn a New Language

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Abstracts

Communication has always been one of the most pivotal problems man should get along with; learning a new language has always been a cumbersome journey where the majority of learners cannot reach the desirable destination. In effect, learning language successfully necessitates a set of ingredients that language teachers should try to imbue their classes with. The role of technology in man's life is undeniable; In fact, some scholars believe that technology is like an earthquake which stimulates men to build their lives again on a new basis. In the realms of second language, mobile application in the new era is in its infancy. However, it is going to progress step by step. Mobile applications firstly have eased the learning of sub-skills in second language namely, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. In parallel fashion, they recently have concentrated on teaching second language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). For instance ,lots of subscriptions are on hand for English and other language learners. Lessons in Shona—Zimbabwe's major language, are some of the examples that are available for download (Winter , 2005) [8]. In order to uncover the effectiveness of mobile application in teaching new language 5 Iranian EFL language learners who had a tremendous experience of working with mobile application were interviewed. The results of this study indicate that mobile applications have a considerable impact upon learning a new language both in terms of language sub-skills and skills. Also, participants believe that mobile application are going to progress step by step which makes the process of learning a new language through them more easily. Moreover, they propound that mobile application can be utilized as ancillary trend for learning new materials that can promote the overall achievement of learners.

1. Introduction

Mobile learning, or m-learning, is an escalating branch of the e-learning movement. MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) has developed to maintain students' language learning with the increased use of mobile technologies. With MALL, students are able to access language learning materials and to keep in touch with their instructors as well as friends whenever and wherever they want (Zhao, 2005) [9]. Smart phones can be instrumental in language instruction, but are not in and of themselves instructors; rather, they are instructional tools; of the very common qualities of smart phones are their internet access, voice and text messaging and its capacity to record videos. For the sake of learning a new language successfully, relatively the whole package of these characteristics can enable language learners to practice their communicative skills, benefiting from the privilege of genuine content, and task accomplishment. In the realms of research these worthwhile benefits are very rare, or in other words it is an optimal situation that can hardly be found (Zhao, 2005) [9].

2. Literature Review

There are many ideas about how smartphones can be integrated in schools and learning processes. One field that could really benefit from this is the field of language learning. Learners can make good use of the facilities to listen to audio at any time as well as the "always on" characteristics of portable devices which encourage spontaneous interaction (Kukulska-Hulme, 2006).

Moreover, the effects of mobile communication are frequently mentioned by Kukulska-Hulme in the publication *Mobile language learning now and in the future* (Kukulska-Hulme, 2006). She states that it is "one of the key advantages" of m-learning considering that it embraces more flexible arrangements than traditional classroom situations.

Even if the widely spread usage of mobile devices is a relatively young phenomena, there has already been a lot of studies focusing on the combination of mobile phones and language learning (Başoğlu,



2010[1];Hedbom, 2008 [2]; Stockwell, 2007 [5]; Thornton & Houser, 2005 [6]). Many of these reports show a very positive effect from involving mobile devices in language learning.

A Turkish study compared digital flashcards on a mobile phone with traditional flashcards on paper. The results showed that the ones who had used the mobile application had reached better results than the ones who used traditional methods (Başoğlu, 2010) [1]. Furthermore a survey in Japan from 2007 concludes that the potential of the mobile application was great (Stockwell, 2007) [5].

In another more extensive survey, over 300 Japanese university students were studied regarding their use of mobile devices in a language learning context. The results showed that the students evaluated educational materials designed for mobile phones very positively and that they were able to learn via this medium. The researchers also found mobile phones are a very effective platform for vocabulary learning as they are able to catch the students interests and create new study opportunities (Thornton & Houser, 2005).[6]

In her study on mobile learning to support teaching English as second language, Maryam Tayebinik has highlighted the application of a variety of mobile devices in the field of TESL. She declares that mobile devices have become a part of our life. Related literature has identified the adoption of this technology by language teachers. The portability and high access of mobile phones have made it very prevalent in educational territory. "Mobile phone is superior to a computer in portability" (Yamaguchi, 2005) [7].

3. Methodology

The participants of this study were 5 Iranian EFL language learners who had considerable experience of learning language via mobile. Their proficiency level ranged from elementary to intermediate based upon Oxford placement test (2007). They were all male and their age ranged from 19 to 31. They all had the experience of learning language via different mobile applications for at least 2 years. They were all interviewed regarding the impact of mobile applications upon their language learning.

4. Data analysis

The paramount role of technology in man's life is undeniable. In fact, some investigators claim that technology has brought about numerous differences in human life. Moreover, it is so great that it has its own languages and its own norms. Learning a second language is not an easy task and the majority of students have lots of problems in learning a second language. One of the best ways to pave the difficult road of language learning is benefiting from technology. Smartphone and its miraculous applications can aid language learners' influentially in their language learning. Here 5 students who had tremendous experience of learning second language via smart-phones' applications were interviewed so as to find out whether these application can play any important role in students' language learning or not.

Mehdi: "In my opinion, mobile application can play a pivotal role in language learners' pronunciation, for instance, mobile dictionaries are equipped with audio pronunciation in both British and American pronunciation of a given word and language learners can try to imitate the pronunciation. Also, there is an atmosphere which is intriguing. It offers a new experience and somehow learners become intrinsically motivated. Other benefits of the application are being on hand and very easy to work with."

Based upon the above mentioned statements by Mehdi, it can be concluded that mobile applications, especially mobile dictionaries can help language learners improve their own pronunciation by trying to imitate the way a native speaker pronounces a word. Moreover, other applications namely, example, synonyms, antonyms and part of speech are all easily accessible. What is more, owing to the intriguing atmosphere language learners mostly have intrinsic motivation to work with aforementioned programs.

Mohsen: "I believe that mobile applications like "tune in" can influentially improve language learners' listening, due to the fact that it allows students to listen to any genre of listening comprehension and even record the audio in order to listen to it again. Tellingly, since these programs can be used even with the slowest of internet connections, language learners can listen to these programs live on the bus or during their shuttle. Besides, there are other programs like TOEFL tests where language learners can evaluate their listening ability."

From what Mohsen mentioned above, it can be inferred that mobile applications such as "tune in" can play an integral role in aiding students boost their listening skill. One of the most crucial advantages of these applications is enabling language learners to listen to radio channels directly in their shuttle time or other times in order to make the most of it. Moreover, there are several other applications that allow



language learners to test their listening proficiency in accordance to a standard benchmark like TOEFL or IELTS.”

Saeed:” I believe that mobile application can have crucial impact upon learning a foreign language. For instance, mobile applications like PDF, New York Times and Washington post enable me to read e-books such as novels or other stories whenever I find some time. Also, I can read the news and learn new things by reading eminent newspapers. Using several other applications like Mozilla Firefox and Chrome I can surf the net and make the most of wireless internet. Besides, I can test my reading comprehension proficiency in accordance to a standard benchmark like TOEFL and IELTS.”

According to above-mentioned sentences by Saeed, it can be understood that mobile applications can play an integral role in language learners’ reading comprehension. They can benefit from different applications for reading e-books. Additionally, language learners can find their favorite article or essay by taking advantages of wireless internet. Moreover, they can read the most recent news by benefiting from newspapers and relevant applications. Finally, they can make the most of international tests and evaluate their reading comprehension based upon these applications namely, TOEFL and IELTS.

Hassan” I highly recommend mobile applications for learning a new language especially for learning vocabulary which is a difficult task to accomplish. Mobile applications such as 504, 601, 1100, most frequent vocabularies of GRE, TOEFL and IELTS, or Babble is the most interesting programs. By using these programs language learners are able to expand their knowledge of vocabulary in different ways. For instance, Babble provides the most frequent and essential vocabularies with their pronunciations as well as pictures. And there are several tests and practices that measure not only the learners’ knowledge of vocabulary but also their pronunciation.”

From what is stated by Hassan, it can be extracted that mobile applications can ease the process of vocabulary learning by offering numerous applications where students can learn vocabulary through both sound , picture and video which can considerably ease the process of vocabulary learning. Also, there are several tests by which language learners can find out how well they learned the new materials. Additionally, one of the best merits of these applications is catering the most frequent vocabularies for different purposes namely, GRE, TOEFL and IELTS. Moreover, in Babble the most basic vocabulary that is mandatory for survival is accentuated.

Sina:” In my opinion, mobile applications can help language learners improve their grammatical knowledge enormously. There are several programs by which language learners can learn the rules of grammar and then they can test their grammatical knowledge through applications that are designed for evaluating grammatical knowledge like paper-based TOEFL application. Tellingly, these applications give feedback to students based upon the mistakes they make and proposes them to review certain parts in order to improve their grammatical knowledge.”

From what Sina mentioned, mobile applications enable language learners to learn grammatical knowledge systematically and then by benefiting from other applications they can evaluate their knowledge of grammar and by taking advantages of the proposed feedbacks they can improve their grammatical knowledge.

5. Conclusion

The significant role technology plays in different realms of human life is obvious for everybody. One of the toughest chore students face is learning a second language which necessitates high commitment and involvement. However, most of language scholars and investigators are exploring to find a far easier way for teaching language to students. One of the most recent ways is learning language through smartphone and its applications. Indeed, the current applications of smartphones can facilitate students’ learning enormously. Mobile applications allow students to boost their skills as well as their sub-skills. In terms of language skills, students’ can listen to different genres of listening directly, or they can read e-book and download them via wireless internet, they can have an unlimited access to different websites and read newspapers. In terms of sub-skills, they can check the pronunciation of a given word through dictionaries and listen to the way native speakers of Britain and America pronounce it. They can benefit from various vocabulary software and by considering their needs they can boost their vocabulary knowledge according to their needs. What is more, language learners can make the most of the applications which are attributed to grammar learning and after sufficient instructions they can evaluate their grammatical



knowledge. Besides, these evaluative applications offer enough feedback so that language learners are capable of finding out the aspects of grammar to which he needs to devote more time.

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