

Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL): Use of Whatsapp as an Effective Tool to Support ESL/EFL Writing Skill

Abstract

Language is the medium of communication by which human beings convey message, emotions, thoughts and ideas. This communication can be done through four skills LSRW. In this paper the emphasis is on writing skill and its way of learning through latest mobile technology. Hence, the present paper explains MALL and the ways of improving writing skill through whatsapp. Present study also aimed to elucidate tentative use of whatsapp to develop writing skill. In particular, this study searches the role of mobile devices as an effective tool for ESL/EFL writing skill .

Keywords: MALL, ESL/EFL, Writing Skill, Mobile Technology.

Introduction

Indian education system mostly based on writing skill to assess learners' performance but due to the time constraint, syllabus doesn't provide enough time to practice this skill. Further the study discusses various opinion related to m-learning. Productive skill like writing which needs a lot of practice to mastery on it. As far as students learning behavior is concerned, it has been realized that the internal motivation is needed for learning a language. So, the present study seeks whatsapp as writing skill developer because it can be used in classroom as well as outside the classroom.

Background to The Study

Mobile technology is mounting very fast due to the human mind. The recent growth of technology has led individuals to have instant and unlimited access to it. Mobile-technology includes all forms of tablets, laptops, iPods and Smartphone. According to Graca, Jacuim and Ramos (2014:35) "Mobile technology is a resource with great potential to be used both in teaching and learning. Its characteristics of mobility, portability and interactivity, ease of use, low cost, multiple and varied functions (like communication, taking pictures, recording, geographical orientation, etc.) bring great advantages (and challenges) to the process of teaching and learning: it eases experimental learning, it enhances collaborative work and makes knowledge more accessible, personalized and adapted to each one's rhythm." Most recent form, and the most convenient is Smartphone. This type of technology is spreading throughout the world. A device that allows any human being to connect to the world within a second. It is obvious that technology has made human life easier more than ever in all aspects, including education. According to The Statics Portal "The number of mobile phone users in the world is expected to pass the five billion mark by 2019. In 2016, an estimated 62.9 percent of the population worldwide already owned a mobile phone. The mobile phone penetration is forecasted to continue to grow, rounding up to 67 percent by 2019". This mobile technology is used for various purposes like communication, getting news, chatting with others on the social websites and so on. Therefore, there is a dramatic change in teaching/learning a language. Commencement of the twentieth century, there has been a wide association over the needs of technology for learning a language because language learners are exposed to real life situations. Various kinds of media, like Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp and etc., all these serve an enrichment medium to learn a language.

Mohd. Asif

Assistant Professor,
Deptt. of English,
King Khalid University,
Saudi Arabia

What is Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Kukulka-Hulme and Shield (2008:272) define MALL as "the use of technologies such as mobile phones, MP3/MP4 players, PDAs and palmtop computers for language learning." A handheld electronic device that assists in language learning is known as MALL. This electronic device (MALL) has gained attention of ELT experts since last two decades because it plays an important role in teaching and learning a language. Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has been designed to improve communicative competence of the learner. According to Hea-Suk (2013:15) "The growing popularity and advancing functionality of using mobile technologies have raised their potential in teaching and learning languages" MALL is considered a combination of Mobile Learning (m-learning) and Computer-assisted language learning (CALL).

Review of Literature

Yang and Plakans (2012) emphasizes on the development of educational literacy for English as Second Language students in the US. They acknowledged that their English educational literacy is only enhanced when students are assigned productive skills like reading and writing when students regularly practice by using mobile devices, in result, their English academic skills enhances. Ghada Awada (2016) results indicated that the use of the WhatsApp mediation was more effective than the regular instruction in improving the critique writing proficiency of the participants and in increasing their motivation for learning.

GameWiredu (2007) studies the association between mobile-technology and individual success. He identifies the main reason for their achievement is the motivation that is presented whilst using handheld technology. He detects the importance in personalization and how well it derives the motivation in using mobile-technology. Vibey and Gronland (2012) In the process of language learning "mobile technologies provide many advantage, flexibility, low cost, small size, and user friendliness, researchers are exploring how to use mobile technology to support language learning." Praveen (2016:1826) quote Riyanto (2013) that "WhatsApp can be utilized not only to mingle with friends, but also to study and even learn a new language. He uses the example of English by stating non-English students are able to learn English faster, better and more fun by joining a WhatsApp group with fellow students and teachers. The teachers then are able to post small assignments and ask students to complete them by using one of the possibilities WhatsApp offers. In this way, students are able to read English and are obliged to answer in English, which improves their English language skills".

Writing Skill and Whatsapp

Writing skill is the most important skill for any student who wants to score high marks in exam. Most of the exams are based on writing skill but ESL/EFL learner generally is weak in writing skill due to mother tongue interference. Therefore, country like India where students mother tongue is not English. They

must be given freedom to use social media apps so that they can be motivated and use their time in writing skill through whatsapp. Regarding the features of whatsapp application Gada mentions (2016:6) "The WhatsApp application has four main functions; it motivates the learners, helps students communicate with the peers, sends information, manages the class, enables students to be up to date, saves a lot of time and increases efficiency by reminding students what they have to do and what they have to bring to class."

Strategy: Teaching Writing Skill Through Whatsapp

First, a teacher creates a whatsapp group for his assigned class. Second, he gives them a writing assignment on the WhatsApp with clear instructions. Hypothetically, students show eagerness to write the paragraphs or sentences according to the given instructions. It is realized that adult learners are very fond of using social media. So, their motivational level would be very high. According to the features of whatsapp, various ways can be used for student-student interaction and student-teacher interaction on WhatsApp in an example-based rather than prescriptive manner (error correction was reduced to a minimum). Quoting Maria and Elena (2014:58) "using Whatsapp for foreign language learning is an effective strategy for a number of reasons. Firstly, students did noticeably improve their meaning negotiating skills and, despite their many fundamental linguistic errors, were able to understand and make themselves understood at all times. Secondly, they also reduced to some extent the amount of language mistakes (lexical, morphological, and syntactic)." At the same time, it can also be used to appreciate student's response by sending them a quick feedback. This approach can work in increasing students' motivation towards writing the assignment on Whatsapp. Whatsapp activities for writing skill are not only limited to writing itself but it also focuses on learning new vocabulary and using correct grammar. At the same time, students are also connected with internet; it can also help them to use impressive language. In this way, students are engaged in a significant communication context. In writing skill, brainstorming phase is very important. Whatsapp group can provide an opportunity to discuss the writing topic in detail by sharing information. Besides writing task, Whatsapp can be utilized in communicating with students when the interaction is not possible in face to face mode. In this teaching strategy, accuracy in writing skill is not the prime target but the focal point is engaging students in order to improve their writing skill.

Conclusion

The current study has discussed the effective role of whatsapp in teaching writing skill. It is also mentioned in the study that mobile technology should be given opportunity because traditional methods of teaching occupies central place in India. It also analysis that adult learners are fond of using social media very much so careful plan of whatsapp use can fetch fruitful results in case of learning ESL/EFL because countries like India where students mother tongue is not English. Therefore, learner-

learner and learner-teacher discussion make whatsapp very powerful tool for developing writing skill.

References

1. Kim, Hea-Suk (2013) <http://journal.kamall.or.kr/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/16-2-HSKim.pdf>
2. Vibey, O, Gronlund A. (2012): *Mobile Assisted Language Learning: A Review Of Literature*. In *Proceedings of the 11th World Conferences on Mobile and Contextual Learning (m-learning)*, Helenski: Finalnd (16-18 october 2012, Volume 955)
3. Maria and Elena (2014): *10th International Conference Mobile Learning, 2014 (Madrid, Spain) 28 Feb-2 March*.
4. Ghada Awada (2016): *Effect of whatsapp on critique writing proficiency and perception toward learning* *Cogent Education* Volume 3, 2016-Issue 1.
5. *The Statics Portal*: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/274774/forecast-of-mobile-phone-users-worldwide/>
6. María Dolores Castrillo, Elena Martín-Monje and Elena Bárcena (2014) *Mobile-Based Chatting For Meaning Negotiation In Foreign Language Learning*, *10th International Conference Mobile Learning (Madrid, Spain)*
7. Praveen Sam (2016): *Asian Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities* Vol. 6, No. 9, September 2016, pp. 1826-1833.
8. Kukulska-Hulme, Agnes and Shield, Lesley (2008). *An overview of mobile assisted language learning: From content delivery to supported collaboration and interaction*. *Recall*, 20(3), pp. 271–289.