Mobile Phone – A Useful Tool for English Language Teaching and Assessment

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Abstract-- Mobile phone is a useful tool for English language teaching and assessment. In this article I would like to discuss how this simple and easily available tool can be used in the classroom for teaching and evaluating English language. In our educational institutions English is treated as a subject. As a result students become communicatively less competent. In classrooms the language skills of the students are not properly evaluated. Only the memory power of the students is evaluated. As English is a skill, all the four skills should be assessed. This article will definitely help the teachers and students to evaluate the language skills with this small instrument called mobile phone.

Researchers and practitioners' interest has shifted from Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) due to the rapid development in the field of digital literacy. Increased availability of educational application (Apps) and internet connectivity on Smartphones gave birth to borderless and flipped learning. Smartphones provide makes learning possible anywhere, anytime for the digital natives of today. The current study investigates students' perspective regarding the role of Smartphones in English language learning. This study was descriptive in nature and a mixed method approach is used for data collection. Data were collected through self-reported questionnaires for students. The questionnaires were distributed to a sample consisting of 480 students of BS and MA English final year from 6 Universities in Punjab, Pakistan. Sample was selected through convenient cluster sampling technique. Data were analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 22.0) by applying frequency, percentage, mean score, standard deviation, independent sample t-test and One Way ANOVA. The results of the study indicated the potential of MALL as a promising approach to learning English. Students were found willing and motivated to adapt their Smartphones for learning English. On the basis of findings researcher concluded that Smartphone plays a positive role in helping students learn English. Majority of the students showed a positive attitude towards the role of Smartphone in English language learning. This study is significant for ESL learners as it offers innovative way of teaching but a sound pedagogical infrastructure and training is needed. It was recommended that must be engaged as an effective learning tool in ESL classrooms for learning English. Further, experimental research can be done to analyze the effectiveness of smartphone for learning English.

I. INTRODUCTION

"The way to bring a language to life is to be able to converse in it every day. **Mary Hanafin.** Despite years of learning the language, the students fail miserably in English communication. Research studies hold our examination system responsible for this set back. The evaluation pattern has made both the students and teachers believe that English is a subject to be learned. Hence, they prepare to face the examination by memorizing a few essays, paragraphs and annotations and get a pass in it. When they need to write something on their own or face a situation to converse, they struggle hard. Now, the educationists and teachers realize the actual need of the hour and strongly believe that English is not a subject but a language of four skills. The objective of teaching English is to make the student use the four skills efficiently in real life situation.

II. EVALUATION

If the aim is to inculcate the four skills, a suitable evaluation pattern should be adopted to assess the achievement of the skills. In the classroom the teacher can impart and evaluate the four skills by using a simple, common device called mobile phone. It is really a boon to language teachers as all the features facilitate learning a language. It has audio, video and text messages which facilitate learning, practicing and evaluation possible. In this article I would like to discuss how the four skills can be inculcated and evaluated by using the common man's device called mobile phones.

Mobile phone is a common instrument that can be seen in every hand especially in the hands of students. To be frank students have the latest mobile phones. As they are inquisitive in nature, they become experts in operating various functions of the mobile. It has been considered as a very useful and convenient tool for teaching and learning.

I would like to discuss how this mobile phone can be used inside the classroom for teaching English. English is a language of four skills and how these skills can be inculcated and evaluated with the help of the mobile phone.

III. Note Feature

Note is a valuable feature. It can be used to take notes. English language can be acquired from watching movies, listening to news, by reading books and newspapers etc. When we come across a new word, or structure, or an expression we can immediately save them in the mobile phone by using the note feature. Frequently or occasionally it can be revised as we cannot keep everything in our memory. In the class, the teacher can ask the students to present what they have collected in their note feature. The students should be taught and encouraged to use the new words and expressions in their conversation.

IV. Text Messages

Communication is an important skill to be practiced in English classes. We can create fun in the classroom by making the students send text messages among themselves. The teacher can divide the class into heterogeneous groups. A theme can be given to each group. The group members should send their opinion regarding the topic in simple sentences. The group leader collects and consolidates all the messages send by the members and holds an open discussion with the members and presents it in the class. By doing it students learn how to organize and express their thoughts and ideas in simple language. Teacher corrects the mistakes at the end of each presentation.

V. Camera

Beautiful pictures, natural sceneries and scenes that captivate the mind when the students are taken to the field trip or educational tour can be captured by using camera. Back to class they can be used for group discussion. Teacher can make the students speak about their personal experience by using them. Enthusiastically they involve themselves in the activity and express their feelings and experience in their own language. This will definitely develop their English language skill. Images thus captured can be used for making albums, project works etc. it can also be used as a flash card for teaching new words.

VI. Voice Recorder

It is a very useful facility available on mobile phones. It facilitates one to record speech sounds in the mobile phone. One can record the conversation and replay it. It is a very useful tool that a teacher can use inside the classroom. Of the four skills of English language, listening is the basic skill. Only heard sounds are produced, those unheard are never produced. Hence, it is mandatory to give listening practice to learners of a foreign language.

Mobile is a very simple and convenient tool to do this. Teacher can record or download audio clippings from internet or movies and play it inside the classroom. Students can be made to listen to it carefully and questions can be asked to check their comprehension skill.

Hence, students get a chance to listen to an English speech or conversation or a debate. It helps them imitate correct speech sounds and pick up apt vocabulary and language structures in their usage. Students learn how ideas are presented coherently. It will definitely improve their style of speech and get them familiar with the native speaker's voice and accent.

Mobile phones can be used to test the reading skill also. The students can be asked to read a passage from the text and it can be recorded by using the mobile phone. The recorded sound clipping can be replayed to the student and asked to identify the errors committed by him in reading the text. The student becomes excited to listen to his own voice on the mobile phone and corrects the mistakes in reading. This activity generates great enthusiasm among the learners and they learn correct pronunciation, voice modulation, stress and pause etc.

Similarly, the voice recorder can be used to practice oral skills too. The students can be asked to speak about a particular theme. Guidance should be given to present the theme. The rendition of the students can be recorded and played back. The teacher can correct the student's error by citing an example from the presentation of other students.

VII. Video Recorder

Another important tool available on the mobile phone is the video recorder. Video clippings regarding day to day events, important happenings in the country, scenes from the plays and movies can be imported from the internet and played for the students. It acts as a useful resource for training oral skills. Important movie clippings related to the lesson can be clipped and saved in the mobile phone. Students can be asked to watch the clippings and may be asked to describe what they have watched. It will increase the spoken skill of the students.

Oral presentations, role play and such other activities involving the students can be recorded by using the video recorder. Students will be happy and enthralled to see them on the screen. It not only enhances the performance of the students but also motivates the other students to come forward and take participation in the activities. Videos of historical plays, classical works, and recitation of famous poems are available on net. Teachers can download those videos and played to the students.

VIII. INTERNET

Internet also can be connected to a mobile phone. Students can surf the net for getting notes, pictures, PowerPoint presentations, extra reading materials etc. Most of the presentations, video and audio clippings available on net are mobile friendly. It can be downloaded and used for learning.

IX. MOBILE DICTIONARY

Mobile dictionary is a mobile application that translates words from one language to another. The application allows having English and two additional languages on the device at the same time. While reading, students may come across many new words. By using the mobile dictionary they can find out the meaning of the words. Reference work is made easy with this facility on the mobile.

X. ADVANTAGES

1. It increases student motivation through the use of familiar technology.
2. Even unenthusiastic learners are attracted towards this technology.
3. Increases student use of the four skills - reading, writing, speaking and listening
4. Helps students become more competent in English.
5. promotes the use of English for communicating
6. Helps in assessing the language skill of the learners.

XI. DISADVANTAGES

- All the students will not have mobile phones with them.
- Activities such as browsing internet, sending messages, making calls will cost money.
- For young learners, the consent of the parent is necessary for using mobile phones in the school.
- Use of noisy phones in the classroom may harm the classroom atmosphere.
- Keen observation of the teacher is mandatory otherwise the use of mobile phone may divert the attention of the students to unnecessary web sites.

Every technology has its own good and bad effects. We need to recognize them and tap them for good ends. Mobile phone also has its own good and bad effects. If we brilliantly plan, we shall use them for learning and evaluating the language skills. Proper plan and judicious use of the mobile phone will definitely bring about desirable learning outcomes.

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