VEDA'S
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (JOELL)
An International Peer Reviewed Journal
http://www.joell.in

Vol.4
Spl.Issue 2
2017

LLR-ELT 2K17

ISSN: 2349-9753

THE UPSURGE IN FRAMEWORKS THAT EMPHASISE THE IMPORTANCE OF M-LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Mobile learning is often quoted as one of the 21st century skills we need to be teaching our students. But how is this learning so important in language classrooms? What is theintuition behind mobile learning? In this paper we discover what it is exactly and what the developments of the upsurge of m-learning are for language teachers. Besides, we also explore a number of classroom activities and the concept of learning with handheld devices. The main aim of this paper is to incorporate both formal learning inside the classroom, and formal and informal learning outside the classroom, across numerous devices, in a diversity of physical and temporal grounds. It is emphasised that these frameworks are used to encourage learners to become creatively and actively involved in the mobile learning process. In this paper we also look at how we can foster a culture of creativity in ELT classrooms and exhibit practical knowledge in deploying M-learning. The methods discussed in this paper are based on a survey of earlier and recent research.

Keywords: *M-Learning, Classroom Activities, Handheld Devices, Frameworks, Practical Knowledge.*

WHAT IS MOBILE LEARNING?

Precisely what one mean by mobile learning is the matter of some debate (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009; Traxler, 2009). Does mobile learning literally refer to the mobility of learners—the notion that one could learn anywhere and anytime—or to the mobility of mobile devices themselves? Both of these characteristics are undoubtedly important but present definitions also stress the importance of context. This discusses the skill of mobile learning to comprehend both formal learning within the classroom, and informal and formal learning outside the classroom, across innumerable devices, in a variety of temporal and physical arenas. Communication with mobile devices is merely one part of the picture; of crucial importance in any discussion of mobile learning are the interfaces that it supports and the ways in which these lead to learning.

Sharples, Arnedillo-Sánchez, Milrad and Vavoula (2009) describe mobile learning as "the processes (both personal and public) of coming to know through exploration and conversation across multiple contexts among people and interactive technologies" (p. 225). This view is reinforced by Sharples, Kukulska-Hulme, Milrad, Vavoulaand Arnedillo-Sánchez (2009):

The mobile technology, while essential, is only one of the different types of technology and interaction employed. The learning experiences cross spatial, temporal and/or conceptual borders and involve interactions with fixed technologies as well as mobile devices. Weaving the interactions with mobile technology into the fabric of pedagogical interaction that develops around them becomes the focus of attention. (p. 20)

Fragment of the challenge in arriving at a particular definition of mobile learning has to do with the point that it is a hastily changing field, with fresh and classier handheld devices frequently appearing on the market. The devices themselves used in mobile learning may range from mobile phones and tablets to digital cameras, MP3 and MP4 players and gaming consoles. Nevertheless we define m-learning, it is clear that when we speak about the use of mobile devices in education, and the discussion wants to be enclosed within the wider context of pedagogy and learning.

M-LEARNING IN ELT

Definitions apart, the increasing accessibility and ubiquity and of mobile devices and access to mobile networks universally is beyond argument. In spite of continuous barriers to mobile learning in education, which include cost, technical constraints and attitudinal factors (JISC, 2012, pp. 43-44), mobile learning is on the upsurge. This has significant implications for teachers, who need to first identify this fact and then take advantage of it. Kukulska-Hulme (2009) describes this as follows: "To a certain extent, by dint of their ubiquity, mobile devices are already influencing how people learn; on the other hand, educators need to do more than just watch it happen" (p. 158).

Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) has definitely made an arrivalin the field of ELT, first about 2009 with the appearance of mobile 'apps' (programs or applications) for language learning established by the British Council, meticulously followed by major ELT publishers generatingobjective and course book-related apps (Dudeney&Hockly, 2012). Nevertheless, further than this content-driven method, the execution of MALL in ELT to date in specific classrooms has in the main been ad hoc and restricted to initial adopters. This is in stark difference to mainstream education, where large-scale projects assimilating MALL into programmes, such as MOLENET in the United Kingdom, or school and university enterprises, such as those by Abilene Christian University, Forsyth County Schools or Kansas University in the United States, have been in succession for several years. Similarly, research into the assimilation of mobile devices into classroom teaching in countries such as Australia has inclined to emphasis on mainstream education (Pegrum, Howitt, &Striepe, 2013; Pegrum, Oakley, & Faulkner, 2013). In the arena of ELT, the British Council is employing larger scale app-based mobile learning plans in developing countries such as China and Sudan, but as this is comparatively new territory for English language teachers, ELT-related m-learning research revisions are still few and far between. The scarcity of studies is compounded by the facts that the rapid evolution of devices makes longitudinal research

studies difficult (Pachler, 2009, p. 4) and many institutions actively ban the use of mobile devices in classrooms (JISC, 2012, p. 3).

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

Though there is a reductionist inclinationin the arena of ELT to parallel mobile learning with the usage of apps on smart phones or tablets, with learners retrieving this content outside of class time, there is no purpose why mobile devices couldn't be integrated into formal learning both outside and inside the classroom. For trainers to take complete advantage of the prospective of mobile learning, it entails a move in thinking about not just where mobile learning could take place, but also an awareness that mobile or handheld devices have many affordances than merely the intake of language in pre-packaged apps. As with any technology, it is not the technology itself that enhances teaching or learning, but rather the use to which it is set. In this context, it is beneficial to discriminate between mobile learning activities that emphasis on intake of content, and activities that inspire the creation of language.

Learning activities can be intended which simply substitute a mobile device for a traditional device, or learning activities can be considered which would be impossible to carry out without a mobile device. It is these later activities that completely realize the potential of MALL. Puentedura's (2010) SAMR design is one that can practically be applied to the design of mobile learning activities for ELT. The SAMR designrecommends that technology could be used in learning activities in the following ways:

- Substitution: technology acts as a tool substitute, with no functional change
- Augmentation: technology acts as a direct tool substitute, with functional improvement
- Modifications: technology allows for significant task redesign
- Redefinition: technology allows for the creation of new tasks previously inconceivable. (Puentedura, 2010)

The SAMR design defines the usage of technology in learning tasks, from the simplest (Substitution) to the more difficult (Redefinition) and innovative ones. The SAMR design perceives Substitution and Augmentation as methods to improve learning tasks, whereas Modifications and Redefinition allow for transformation.

CLASSROOM TASKS

To elucidate the SAMR design, how might each of these phasesconvert into classroom tasks with mobile devices? Below given are task models for each phase of the SAMR design using mobile phones (although other handheld devices such as tablets can be used to carry out some of these tasks).

At the modest level, a mobile learning task that includes Substitution might implicate giving learners short dictations, which they take down as note-taking function or SMS text messages on their mobile phones. Here we merely substitute a mobile device for pen and paper; the dictated could be saved and shared electronically.

Going up a phase in the SAMR design, a mobile learning task that contains Augmentation mayinclude learners using the text function on their devices to create a sequence story in groups, which is later transferred to a blog, with remarks from other groups, classes, or even parents (of young learners) beseeched. In this task, though the mobile text function has again replaced for pen and paper, by producing a sequence story in electronic setup and partaking it through a blog, we have further added a level of 'functional improvement' and enrichment: the stories could easily be shared with an audience elsewhere the classroom, welcoming interactions that would otherwise not be as easy to achieve.

A classroom activity replicating the SAMR design's Alterations stage may provide learners with the chance to engage in pairs, practising and video recording short oral presentations on their devices. In this case, the device allows learners to practise, record, and re-record till they are content with the final version. The class time spent on repetition and rehearsal offers learners with intensive language rehearsal and no loss of inspiration, by providing them the chance to assess their output immediately in virtual privacy and to develop their performance on succeeding takes. Once learners have fashioned a

final and polished description of their oral presentations, these can be shared electronically through a class blog, video-sharing site or a wiki. In this example, the use of mobile technology has changed a traditional oral task and ensued in a meaningfully higher amount of class time being spent on recurrence and rehearsal, a significant part of language learning. And as with the sequence story example above, the finishing products can effortlessly be shared electronically with a broader audience beyond the classroom.

Lastly, a classroom task that permits for Redefinition as per the SAMR design may use the functions or affordances of a device to create anabsolutely new task. For instance, a treasure hunt that uses GPS enabled mobile devices for learners to obtain clues to be resolved in exact locations in or outside the institute. This creates a totallyfresh learning experience and comes nearby to the description of mobile learning that forefronts the prospective of mobile learning to connect various contexts. For samples of such 'geolocation' tasks with EFL learners look Fox (2011) and Driver (2012).

MOBILE LITERACY

The classroom tasksdefined above suggest a certain amount of understanding with mobile devices on the part of learners and teachers. This understanding, which we can mention to as 'mobile literacy', is an increasingly vital skill. Parry (2011), for example, claims that "The future our students will inherit is one that will be mediated and stitched together by the mobile web" (p. 16). He adds, "Teaching mobile web literacy seems to me as crucial as teaching basic literacy" (Parry, 2011, p. 16). Adding activities such as those labelled above into our classroom practice, particularly those activities that allow the conversion of traditional classroom tasks through the use of devices, can help learners grow their mobile literacy within the framework of English language learning. The future is progressively mobile, and it befits us to reflect this in our teaching exercise.

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