

Smartphone Based Language Learning through Mobile Apps



Sonal Sharma

Abstract: *Mobile technology signifies an innovative approach to the modern education in the present times. In this era smartphones have been integrated into learning system by having different user friendly applications (APPs). The wide range of availability of smart phones connected to mobile network and the occurrence of APPs developed for the educational purposes provide us with the possibility and feasibility of mobile teaching and learning that turn out to be a boon in the educational sector nowadays. The wide-ranging use of Smartphones and different user-friendly gadgets has transformed the outmoded techniques of teaching and learning process entirely. Consequently the students are finding it more practical to understand through such devices reinforced by internet. This extensive usage of smartphones has given birth to loads of mobile application in Language teaching especially English. Abundant apps are available for language learners to refer through easy access to the internet to enhance their communication skills. Through such apps learning materials can be easily accessed and transferred due to the transportability and user-friendliness of such portable devices. The main objective of this paper is to identify the effectiveness of learning LSRW skills through mobile technology and to classify apps based on the learners' level. The study also discusses the plan, technique, theory and instructive features that support the various mobile apps. Various apps are developed to increase the effectiveness of the communication skills of the learners wherein the prime emphasis is to be laid on the enhancing of basic communication skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing skills with the help of Mobile phones.*

Keywords : *mobile technology, smartphones, mobile APPs, LSRW skills.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The accessibility of smart phones connected to mobile network and the occurrence of APPs developed for the educational purposes provide us with the possibility and feasibility of mobile teaching and learning which is widely used by the teachers and students nowadays. With the advent of smart phones and the latest technology support, Language teaching has become easier and on a fingers tap only. The popularity of mobile devices such as iPods, iPads and smart phones has made mobile teaching and learning both possible

and feasible. Mobile devices are in essence devices for ICTs (information and communication technologies). If teachers have a deepened understanding of information technology and if they can change their philosophy of teaching, the ICT-based teaching mode can be ensured. The present study is based on such various language learning applications applicable to both iPhone and Android Operating systems available for mobile phones and evaluates them according to a wide range of criteria available at various language learners' level. It is important for teachers to carefully consider the impact and value of new technologies in their classroom, as new technologies provide students with new avenues of literacy to explore.

Three major benefits with the app learning are: first, apps tend to teach vocabulary in relevant contexts; second, apps significantly adapt to suit the skill sets of individual learners; and third, apps often offer explanatory corrective feedback to learners.

II. THE CONCEPT OF MOBILE LEARNING

Some scholars define mobile learning as a process of gaining knowledge through conversations across multiple contexts among people and personal using interactive technologies with a focus on various contexts. The technology to support in this process comprises various devices like cell phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), smartphones, pads, pods, etc. From the above definitions, it is likely to say that mobile learning is creating an Interactive learning environment wherein students with multiple contexts use different kinds of applications which are available or can be downloaded in the smartphones supported by different operating system like iOS, android etc.

III. MOBILE APPS IN MALL (MOBILE ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING)

Though mobile learning is not new, latest mobile devices with upgraded features have triggered interest among many instructors for applying this new technology in learning. The iPhones, iPod, iPad and other new handheld gadgets are easily available to support this idea. Apps are usually downloaded from various app stores named as App Store, Play store, Google Play, Windows Phone Store, and BlackBerry App World etc. Mobile apps are a software application which is desired to run on iPhones, tablets and other mobile devices. Some of the apps are free to download rather some are paid. Mobile apps categories include gaming, entertainment, and education.

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* Correspondence Author

Sonal Sharma*, Department of English, SRM University Sikkim, India. Email: sonal_160517@yahoo.com

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Categorization of Smartphone Learning Apps

There are plenty English learning apps available in the app stores and choosing the right app is definitely a tiresome job. The difficulty lies on the part of the learner to choose the right app according to their previous and to find out the best suitable app for them. To help the learner's apps can be classified as three below mentioned levels such as:

Primary Level

Primary level learners include students of a very young age who only know to use mobile devices to interact and for playing games. But apps for small children can also be utilized to educate them. There are many educational apps available in the app store and to choose the right one for children can really help them in the process of learning.

There are many benefits of mobile application in education as:

- Makes students more social
- Provides Entertainment
- Always Available
- Utilization of Leisure hours
- Alternate methods of learning
- Pleasurable and informal way of learning

Basic learners include children belonging to the age group around 3 to 10 years. Learners from this age group learn the English language beginning with alphabets, later on recognize the letters, sounds of the alphabets, and trace the letters to write. Children are merely interested in listening to animated rhymes songs and stories but learning the Colors of different things, shapes, name of animals, fruits, vegetables and more can enrich their vocabulary acquisition at the very initial level. Various smartphone apps are developed in such a way that it could meet the need of the basic learners belonging to this age group.

Recent research shows a significant increase in the usage of mobile devices among young children. They get excited in using these devices because it gives them a lot of joy and make them involved into paying games etc. But as beginners, they lack the ability to handle the mobile devices to use as a tool to language learning especially the preschool learners.

Thus, at this situation it's the responsibility of their guardians and teachers to guide them in the choice of the correct or suitable content which produces no harm for children and consequently enhances their learning.

Apps which are good for primary learners are:

1. **Pogg** that deals with Spelling & Verbs and supported by iPhone and iPad which enables learners to Learn Spelling, Language and Vocabulary and is an paid APP. Pogg is a fun based educational game app which is specially designated for young kids. It is also proven as a useful tool in children's language proficiency and speech therapy.
2. **Milo Apps** again is a paid app that deals with speech and enhances speaking skills. It is supported by iPhone, iPad and iPad and is useful for speech therapy.

3. **Phonetics Focus** that offers various interactive activities to develop speaking skills and its paid.

4. **Mind Snacks** which is again a paid app **that deals with fun games to learn new English words and supported by iOS.** It is designed with 9 addictive games designed for essential vocabulary & conversation skills. Though this app is perfect for adults, kids to learn Spanish.

Secondary Level

Students ranging between 12-17 years belong to the secondary level of learners. Learning with apps can change the regular lecture classroom and students learning interest can increase. As primary learners learn the basics of the language, the secondary will move to the next level of learning the language. Basic communication skills in any language like Listening, speaking, reading, writing skills will be acquired by these learners with the help of these apps. Not only basic communication skills but also grammar, vocabulary and meanings, pronunciation, spellings and more on the part of language acquisition can be acquired by the learners.

Apps which are good at secondary level are:

1. **Rosetta Stone** supported by iOS / Android that enhances vocabulary acquisition and has a good selection of languages to learn. It can be availed free.
2. **Fluentu**, it is a web-based **app** (and now device-based) that provides students with a way to learn a language using real life, native content curated from YouTube. Students can also watch commercials, movie trailers, music videos, news segments, and more in their target language. And it is supported by iOS / Android that enhances vocabulary acquisition and speaking skills, but it is paid.
3. **Mangoosh is supported by** iPhone, iPad and iPod and deals with grammar video lessons and is a paid App. It is very helpful to prepare for GRE, TOFEL, IELTS and other competitive exams. Students preparing for these exams have studied with this app with the help of world class video lessons and practice questions.

Advance Level

Advance level learners include college students and adults group of learners. With the faster development of Apps about learning English and the popularization of smart phone devices among college students, students have become increasingly interested in the learning benefits that apps on smart phone devices bring. According to the research, the Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) can not only enhance students' English ability but also increase students' learning motivation to learn more and more with the help of easy and approachable techniques of learning.

The rapid development of app technologies has made these English learning apps capable enough to integrate different media, for example, text, picture, animation, audio and video can be integrated in order to create a multimedia instructional material to prompt their interest in learning.

There are a lot of apps for learning English for college students who have an easy reach to these available resources and materials. But in reality, the App market is like a forest. There are so many software for college students to choice and use. As there is a lack of recommendation about relevant apps and suggestions about how effectively to use them to learn English. This paper can aid these learners to overcome the problem of choosing the right app for learning at the desired level.

According to the research, listening exercises are the first step for English language learning. They focus more on the listening skill development in mobile learning background by providing repeated exercises on listening. With the popularization of mobile technology and the explosion of apps, college students can use mobile apps to improve their English ability. The finding recommends that the undergraduate students like to use apps to learn English with self-regulated learning method instead of traditional learning method. They are also capable enough to choose their own online resource to suit to their needs to improve their speaking, reading and listening skills.

The advance level learners generally include the students at the college level for whom the technological tools are not new. They interact in with others especially through their Smartphones which is handy to carry and hardly face any difficulty in their exposure to the new method of learning.

According to the research the following apps are good at advance level:

1. **Sounds Right** is supported by iOS and enhances articulation and pronunciation of vowels and diphthongs. It's free of cost.
2. **WordBook XL English Dictionary & Thesaurus for iPad** is supported by iOS and enhances vocabulary acquisition of vowels and diphthongs. WordBook is a comprehensive, **quick** and intuitive dictionary and thesaurus of the English language, now **available** for iPad. WordBook has been the **top** selling commercial English dictionary app on iTunes store since its release in 2008
3. **Speech Tutor** is supported by iPhone, iPad and iPod. It helps the learner in pronouncing specific letters and phonemes. And it's paid. **Speech Tutor Pro** is worth of work designing apps for **speech** therapy and combines together the content from various other useful apps in the industry and brings them in one easy to use **app**.
4. **English Podcast** for Android and nurtures speaking and listening through audio and its free. This app includes podcast that will teach students the skills such as listening to English, understanding basic grammar, vocabulary and idioms, and also public speaking.
5. **Exam Builder** for iPhone, iPad and iPod that enhances Vocabulary Acquisition through illustrative sentences which helps learners to understand how each word is used in context. It's easy to create own exam through this app.

Students can build their own exam by creating some questions.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

On the basis of the discussion it is quite evident that smartphone based language learning is

Becoming very popular nowadays especially in the field of education at all the discussed levels of language learners. It is noteworthy that students usually report that they like smartphone based learning as it is quiet feasible and handy for them to study with the help of such technologically advanced tools. Other authors also hold the same views as they themselves use smartphones, tablets while teaching to their students. M-learning also helpful in motivating slow learners and they enjoy learning through mobile applications. In spend more time studying outside the classroom. Educators are free to use so many available apps in the form of WhatsApp, WeChat, or distinct applications for learning English (Fun Dubbing) etc. With reference to the language skills practiced through smartphones, some researches pointed out specific ones such as writing, speaking especially enriching vocabulary, listening through audio exercises and reading. The research was conducted mostly among students of primary level, secondary level and advanced level. All these level learners learned with the help of miscellaneous mobile assisted applications because of their distinctive features, such as convenience, transportability, immediacy, placement, correctness, and sensitivity, makes it much different from the desktop Internet. The author studied the usefulness of mobile apps in vocabulary enhancement both contextual and literal sense. Smartphones based learning encourages the learner's independence, helps individualize learning, and increases the learner's enthusiasm to study more. With regards to the use of WhatsApp in language learning it is vital to state that writing skills can be improved by means of WhatsApp was more effective than through regular instruction. Moreover, it increased the learners' levels of motivation. Therefore, the utilization of mobile devices in education should be seen as important as other study resources.

With reference to the smartphone based language learning, it is quite obvious that it is important to understand the potential advantages and usefulness of certain applications that helps in based language learning in language learning. It is very true that the availability of smartphones and the potential utilization of mobile devices make m-learning a great opportunity. Most learners use smartphones all the time. It is because of immediacy factor students can approach to their teachers anytime. It enhances your LSRW skills. Mobile devices can be used for collecting study materials, which can considerably reduce heavy loads in the form of carrying books. Moreover, the Internet enables the learner to locate the study material that they are looking for. In this way smart phone based language learning is found to be effective in developing all sort of communication skills, particularly vocabulary. Moreover, the use of apps contributes

V. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to classify the apps in order to assist the learner of different category in choosing the appropriate mobile app. Findings from the reviewed articles are based on mobile apps show that listening skill is better acquired than that of other communication skills like speaking, reading and writing. Listening plays an important role in communication. Listening is the first skill to be acquired early before other skills.

Many apps are constructed in such a way that where uploaded learning materials including video, and few listening exercise can be helpful in enhancing LSRW skills.

The above-mentioned study conducted by the researcher emphasizes the findings that listening skills are better acquired than that of any other skills as sub-skills related to listening are neglected in the language classroom while reading and writing skills are more focused and speaking skills to some extent. Thus, Mobile devices provide plenty of resources to develop the listening skill of the learners who can be exposed to authentic material like live streams, English songs, radio, listening to English news. This paper, thus classified the mobile apps with the objective of aiding the English language learners to choose the suitable app. This classification of apps can enrich the use of mobile learning in acquiring different set of skills required to by a language learner.

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AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Dr. Sonal Sharma, is working as an associate professor and also holds the position of HOD in the department of Language, Literature and Culture studies in SRM University, Sikkim. She has done MA (English), MBA (HR) and Ph.D. in English. She has eight years' experience teaching English literature, Business Communication, Effective Communication, HRM and other management subjects at under graduation and post-graduation level. She has

published various research papers in reputed journals and presented various research papers in National and International conferences and seminars. Also, she has chaired technical sessions in Conferences. Her forthcoming book is "Diasporic Consciousness in V.S. Naipaul's Indian Trilogy".