The Merits and Demerits of the Mobile Based Language Learning (MALL)

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Education is a multifaceted domain that undergoes several changes. The dynamic nature of the processes involved in learning affects the students. In my school, one of the most notable proposals has been the introduction of cell phones in a classroom, which can be used by both teachers and pupils as learning material for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. The number of non-English speaking students in the school has increased over time. Resultantly, the need arises to integrate these learners and bring them up to speed to catch up with other learners who are native speakers of English. Ideally, this is an emerging trend in the education system as a mode of giving instructions to learners. While the institution is going to implement the program, it is essential to scrutinize the merits and demerits of the change in the school.

About Mobile Based Language Learning (MALL)

Mobile-based Language learning (MALL) entails the mechanism of students learning a language using the enhancement of mobile gadgets. In view of (Begum, 2011), MALLP should be classified as a branch of m-learning where mobile technologies (MP3 or MP4 players, mobile phones, or the internet) are employed to facilitate language learning. When fully engaged in classrooms, MALL allows teachers and learners to access materials to learn the English language (Begum, 2011). Aside from that MALL improves the communication among peers in the class and outside schools. It offers the use and retention of the acquired language skills and is the prime source of language education for ESL learners.

In Bangladesh, learning English is deemed a vital aspect for non-English speakers. In fact, English enables the learner to be part of the globalization process (Begum, 2011). In light of this, the school has to develop modern and technological support that will facilitate the learning process of English as a second language. According to Begum (2011), the rapid growth in wireless technology has seen mobile technology and several portable devices impacting the teaching of various subjects worldwide. In that logic, language learning technologies have been developed in a mobilized, personalized, and compact manner. As a result, traditional forms of learning are being transformed into electronic learning (E-learning). According to Akpan (2017), technology aims to improve human lives. The features of mobile phones can be harnessed as adequate learning resources and teaching materials in schools. In fact, Akpan (2017) argues that almost all teachers and students in most high schools have more access to cell phones in schools than stationary. E-learning is worth implementing.

The application of cell phones in classrooms enables the learning process. According to Akpan (2017), mobile learning (M-learning) helps eliminate or reduce the constraints of time that occur in the standard lessons. The idea is that the teachers and the learners are guaranteed maximum or unlimited access to educational and academic purposes or information found on the internet (Akpan, 2017). The class is organized in a design that there are slow and fast learners. Akpon (2017) argues that these types of students will regulate their respective speeds when they use mobile phones conveniently to gain information during the learning routine. With the existence of the short message service (SMS) and electronic mail (e-mails), teachers who are limited by time can provide information such as topics for discussion, research questions, and assignments to the learners in time (Akpon, 2017). The whole concept responds to time constraints which is deemed as one of the challenges of the learning process.

MALL is essential because it terminates the constraint of space in the learning situation. Traditionally, the school and the classroom have been the learning environment. It implies that for the ESLs to gain more knowledge in English, they have to spend much of their time in school and closest to their language teachers. According to Akpan (2017), the sustainable educational goals risk being a mirage provided that the learning process occurs within the confinement of the school compound. By contrast, he argues that non-English speakers will easily access opportunities such as skills, knowledge, and information if MALL is fully applied in the school (Akpun, 2017). ESL students can take part in learning the English language in school and at home, which improves the speed of their language acquisition.

Notably, learning is a social process that occurs through social interactions. For ESL students, the sociability of learning increases when MALL is employed in the classrooms. When the learners send SMSs among themselves or send voice calls to peers and colleagues on academic matters, they interact (Akpon, 2017). Additionally, the social association increases when ESL learners contact experts regarding assignments or questions. Educators such as Jean Piaget have argued that the process of learning occurs best when there is sufficient interaction between the learners and the teachers or among the students (Froese et al., 2012). MALL enables the students to access knowledge easily, seek clarifications from teachers or peers, and share and collaborate towards improving education.

Reasons against MALL

Linguistic reasons have been cited that explain the limitations of MALL. According to Irina (2011), research indicates that learners spend the most time texting compared to the time reading when MALL is involved. As the learners share knowledge and experiences among themselves, texting is the primary form of communication. However, this is a limitation especially in language learning because the students tend to employ shorthand in texting (Irina, 2011). Learners use abbreviations and ignore grammar and syntactic rules such as spelling and punctuation in their written communication using mobile devices for the interest of time. It is particularly detrimental to ESL learners who should learn

about the rules of the language they are breaking (Irina, 2011). Texting and short handwriting penetrate into academic writings that indicate the absence of code-switch skills and the increasing preference for a non-standard form of a language (Froese et al., 2012). Mobile devices in the classroom are thus a tricky venture because of the inherent linguistic problems.

Pedagogical concerns have been raised regarding the implementation of MALL in schools. According to Irina (2011), learning styles and the educational needs of the learners must be recognized in line with the impact of technology on the lives of students. While the program introduces new ways of creating and disseminating knowledge, it is faulted for the emergence of disruption in the learning environment (Irina, 2011). Regarding West (2013), interruptions inevitably prevent the concentration of the learners to the primary activity or task. Texting in the lessons establishes multitasking, which leads to limited or poor performance of the initial work (Irina, 2011). Cheating in assignments using mobile phones is a primary concern that comes with MALL.

Evaluation

While MALL has serious negative implications on learning such as the emergence of grammatical mistakes (shorthand and breaking of linguistic rules), disruptions in learning, and increased cheating in tests, I cannot overlook its merits. In fact, the paper is convinced that the value of the advantages of MALL supersedes the disadvantages. Through MALL, ESL learners have access to instant knowledge, the interactions that make learning effective increase, and limitations to space and time of learning are eliminated. The most important thing about MALL is the ability to harness the learning activity into a social event that is characterized by interactions. Renowned philosophers and educators such as Plato, Aristotle, and Jean Piaget emphasized making the learning environment as interactive as possible to enable the sharing of ideas. The paper is convinced that the MALL introduction for ESL learners in the school is long overdue.

In summary, as the school looks forward to implementing the Mobile Assisted Language Learning Program for non-English-speaking pupils, it is imperative that the administration study the scope of this paper, the advantages and disadvantages of MALL. Every educational change requires scrutiny so the implementer can acclimate to the projected challenges. Besides, this document can help in appraising the program to ensure its success.

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