

Use of Smart Phone Applications (Apps) for English Language Learning

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Abstract

This is the age of globalization and technological advancements. Globalization and technological advancement brought plenty of opportunities and career options to the under graduating and post graduating population in India. English has emerged as the major language of this age. It has become a global language in the present era. Millions of people want to learn English language today. As far as India is concerned, English is the second language in India. However, it is found that most of the students of undergraduate classes and postgraduate classes are poor in English. So as teachers, we have to take lots of efforts for making students use the language in their day today use in and outside of the classroom. We also need to take technological help. This paper is an attempt to find out how mobile applications (Apps) can be useful in the classroom to teach English language.

Keywords: globalization and technological advancements, smartphones, tablets, gadgets, smartphone applications, useful apps, language learning, questionnaire, survey, experiment, observations, etc.

Introduction

The use of smartphones and other gadgets have been extensively found especially in the young population of India. Nowadays, on account of technological advancements, we are using the smartphones and tablets in our personal use. Smartphones are now quite affordable to the students at least to some extent. Some students do make use of smartphones in their day to day life. In the present study, an attempt is made to trace the use of smartphones and use of smartphone applications (apps) in English language learning.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL): An Overview

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) refers to the use of mobile technology in language learning. The mobile devices were invented in 1973 for the first time. From a very basic use messaging and calling, it has been undergoing so many new advanced functions like voice calling, short message, video chat, listening to audio (Mp3, Mp4, Mpeg), web surfing, shopping, Internet Banking and so on. Along with this, the crucial part of the mobile devices have been come out as a very important technological tools for education and language learning, and they are becoming very much useful for teachers, students and the community at large. Since this is the age of technological advancement, the use of Internet has become very affordable to the common people. And this has made open the distance learning a prime means of receiving education from all corners of the world. For instance, the MOOCs have become

very popular online resource of learning and huge numbers of course are available online for the learners all over the globe.

Basically mobile devices (smart phones) are helpful in terms of developing listening, speaking, grammar, and pronunciation. So a variety of research studies have been conducted worldwide. Let's take short review of some of the research studies which are closely related to the present paper. Ally, Schafer, Cheung, McGreal, and Tin,(2007) conducted a study on the use of mobile learning technology to train the students of ESL of the adult age group. They introduced a tutorial program accessible via web-enabled mobile devices to teach L2 English remedial grammar to adult students. The program made up of 86 lessons and related exercises such as true or false, multiple choice exercises, drop downs, changing the order of sentences, matching etc. This study was tested via mobile phones by about 100 adult learners, who exhibited good improvements and expressed positive attitudes about using a mobile phone to learn English grammar. Amer, M. (2010) conducted a research study related to his research leading to Ph.D. This study was conducted on 45 English university students who were learning English as their second language and he discovered students' use of mobile application (Idiomobile) which comprising of a game and quizzes which they could adapt to learn idiomatic expressions and collocations. Idiomobile was trialed on mobile phones for a period of one week, for a total average usage of 7–14 hours. It was observed that the more learners used this application the higher they scored on the quizzes in the application. It is found that students were very motivated and they were quite comfortable in using idiomatic expressions and collocations in their day today use.

Gabarre, & Gabarre (2009) conducted an experiment for about two weeks which involved the use of mobile phones to build communicative writing and speaking skills in the L2 French of university students. In the first phase of the programme 18 students used their phones to take pictures on campus accompanied by a written commentary. In the first phase, 22 students prepared recordings of a simulated dialogue. Student productions were sent via MMS to an online class forum. Students could view each other's work and used to comment on it in writing and with audio recordings in the forum. Thus, these studies related to use of mobile phone applications are instrumental in giving further direction during the present research study.

The Present Study Includes the Following Steps

- To read about the topic
- To prepare background for the study
- To prepare questionnaire
- To make a survey of the use of smartphones and smartphone applications among the students
- To identify various smartphones applications for English language learning
- To experiment with undergraduate students
- To note the observations

Identifications of Useful Smartphone Applications (Apps)

After having an extensive survey of materials and smartphone applications, the following applications (Apps) were found which could be very helpful for English language learning

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British Council App

This is a very useful app from British Council, which offers a variety of English language learning materials to learn English. This app is very useful for developing our pronunciations

Duolingo

It is a very wonderful app that has just won the 'Best education start-up award'. It is designed as a game. It is free and with a variety of listening and speaking activities.

Two Min English

This is also very useful apps for language learning. It contains more than two hundred two-minutes video lessons on a variety of topics. For instance social English, business English, travel English, common mistakes in English, idioms and phrases.

Real English

It offers a variety of apps at different levels. Commercial and conversational apps at beginner, and apps for intermediate and advanced levels are also available. The apps are free. Each contains at least 20 lessons/modules that focus on specific area/topic from grammar or vocabulary. We can use them according to our need.

WhatsApp

This probably the most popular mobile messaging app and used by millions of people worldwide today. This is used for exchanging the messages. This mobile messaging app also can be used for English language learning. We can create WhatsApp groups; send each other unlimited images, videos and audio messages.

Ipadio

This is also a very useful app for English language learning as it provides a excellent platform for language learning. It offers not only the audio track of conversational situations but also it lets you record up to 60 minutes of high-quality audio. You can also add titles, descriptions, images after the audio recording. You can save these recording and upload it to various social sites or your device.

Questionnaire and Survey

A survey has been conducted to know the exact position of the use of smartphone among the college students and the teachers. This questionnaire helped us finding the number of students having smartphones and number of students who use smartphones for English language learning. We also came to know how many teachers use smartphones and how many of them use it for educational purposes. The present survey has been conducted with the help of the Post graduate students of the college. The followings are some of the facts we come across on the basis of the questionnaire:

- The 34% of students use/afford smartphones
- The 6% students use smartphones for English language learning
- The 90% teachers uses smartphones
- The 16% teachers uses smartphones for educational purpose

- Only the 4% students know about smartphone applications for English language learning
- The 21% percent students thought smartphone are useful for language learning
- The 18% students thought that smartphone are not useful for language learning
- A very few students know about various smartphone applications that are very useful for English language learning.

Experiment with Undergraduate Students

The post-graduation (M.A. English 2015-16) students and the guide teacher experimented theses smartphone applications on the first year B.A students for fifteen days in the year 2015-16. In fact, we had a plan to experiment on two different groups. However, we have been experimented only with the first group of the first year B.A. students. We experimented with them to develop their English with the help of the above-mentioned smartphone applications. Some of us took some sessions in their group, and we made them use English with the help of various applications.

Observations

When mobile applications were introduced to first year B.A students, the following observations noted:

- Students developed great interest in English language learning
- They found a splendid change in teaching and learning process of English
- Students enjoyed the sessions because they found it very interesting to learn a language on mobile phones.
- Some of them created audio tracks of their voice and overjoyed by listening to their recordings
- Some applications proved as helpful for improving their pronunciation
- Students become competent in the use of English language
- They started communicating with their classmates.

Conclusion

Thus, this study related to the use of smartphone applications helped undergraduate students in developing their English in a quite interesting way. It actually helped them improve their interest in language learning. Students become motivated towards language learning. They have now started making attempts of use English with their friends and classmates. Thus, this study proves as significant and useful.

References

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