

Mobile Assisted Language Learning: Scope and Limitations in Rural and Semi-urban Indian Context

Subodh N. Chinchole

Asst. Professor

Department of English

Jijamata Mahavidyalaya, Buldana (M. S.)

subodhchinchole@gmail.com

=====
Abstract

Today there is a rapid increase in adoption of mobile technology for language teaching and learning of languages. Subsequently Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is gaining popularity not only in informal learning but in institutionalized formal education too. With rapidly growing number of mobile users an unprecedented number of language learning applications have been developed and brought in during the last decade. In more developed countries of the world Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has been propagated and popularized. Widespread and cheaper Internet connectivity, availability and ease of handling portable handheld devices, easy accessibility to language learning materials etc have greatly contributed MALL. It is high time for developing countries like India to adopt and incorporate this new approach in our formal and institutional pedagogy. This paper is an attempt to review the advantages, opportunities and challenges in mobile assisted language learning in Semi-urban and rural Indian context.

Keywords: Mobile assisted language learning, language pedagogy, collaborative learning

We are living in era of Information Communication Technology (ICT) that has taken hold of almost every field of human affair and discipline of study. This ICT has given birth to new pedagogical methods and practices like Smart Classrooms, Digital Schools, and Online Learning etc. taking a big stride towards a really learner-centric education. Digital or Smart classroom provides a wide scope for both teachers and learners to make teaching-learning more effective, informative, and even enjoyable. As far as language learning is concerned, Language Labs and Language Learning Software have also proved to be highly effective and significant especially in FLL and SLL. Of all these, the most attractive technology is mobile technology which represents a revolutionary approach to education. This new language learning approach provides easy access for any learner without the constraints of both place and time. In Mobile Learning, devices like smart phones, iPod, tablet, and laptop are used for language learning. Numerous apps are developed and utilized for those who learn English as a second language.

The Concept of MALL

Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is a subcategory of both mobile learning (M-Learning) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL). It comprises a two-way process including mobile or other portable device enabling communication seconded by appropriate applications usable with smart phone, tablet, palmtop, personal digital assistant (PDA) or iPod. Beatty defines CALL as “a term used for the collection of technologies aimed at enhancing creativity and collaboration, particularly through social networking” (Beatty, 2010). In recent years the widespread use of mobile devices led to the Mobile Assisted Language Learning abbreviated as MALL which “differs from CALL in its use of personal, portable devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access across different contexts of use” (Kukulka-Hulme & Shields, 2008).

Effective implementation of modern technologies in educational and pedagogic practices not only promotes the level of teaching but also motivates the learners by means of innovative and attractive learning modules. The appropriate use of mobile-related technologies in and outside classroom facilitates the teaching-learning process and helps the students learn the language better by enhancing information and knowledge with added interest. Only a basic level of knowledge and skill in handling the technology and devices is demanded on the part of the learner. Moreover the load of books, notes, manuals etc. is reduced to a small portable device that carries in it a huge amount of attractive and inspiring learning materials. Unlike the traditional and even some modern classroom teaching-learning methods, this modern technology has removed all major constraints of time and place paving a way to more personalized, synchronized and collaborative learning experiences for learners of all age groups.

Special Features and Potential of MALL

Mobile assisted learning is “learning across multiple contexts, through social and content interactions, using personal electronic devices” observes Crompton (2013). Therefore, the mobile assisted learning method proves pivotal and more output oriented in the field of language learning. It has an inherent potential to attract and facilitate language learning with more effective and learner friendly features.

Accessibility of small mobile electronic devices is one of the most important factors in popularity and success of mobile assisted language learning. Particularly, in a vast and developing country like India this provides cheaper and wider opportunities in language pedagogies.

MALL facilitates learner centred and personalised method of learning English language as it is up to the learner how, when and to what extent to make use of mobile and other portable electronic learning devices. It also gives the learner a freedom of choice of place, time and learning priorities in contrary to the traditional FLL and SLL techniques as well as modern interactive boards and digital classroom.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:8 August 2019

Subodh N. Chinchole

Mobile Assisted Language Learning: Scope and Limitations in Rural and Semi-urban Indian Context

Its multimodality and user friendliness add to its effectiveness as the learners are involved in touch, command and other actual handling of the devices and software or apps which gives immersive engaging experience to them. Multimedia devices like microphone and speakers provide ample scope for creativity and enhanced learning experience. This approach encourages constructivist learning method for English learners by offering wider opportunities of active participation, personalisation, and multi-level connectivity among co-learners and instructors. Learners are called upon to engage themselves in finding solutions and self-learning by means of videos, images, animations etc.

Mobile Assisted Language Learning, however, is not a self-sufficient way of language pedagogy as it demands more spread of technological awareness, strengthening of infrastructure, increased access to internet and widespread inclusiveness.

Present Indian Scenario and Future Prospects

The last two decades have opened up a new avenue of mobile learning or M-learning in all fields of knowledge. Today no knowledge society can progress unless technology and language go hand in hand. This fact reiterates the necessity to focus more on language teaching-learning practices in any country harnessing the more advanced technologies. The present Indian scenario in the context of ICT infrastructure and preparedness to implement new mobile assisted learning may not be quite satisfactory. However, the rate of development in the field of technology- infrastructure, number of users, availability, and institutional involvement etc. are gathering momentum in the urban as well as semi-urban areas of the country.

According to a study by Economic Times (San Francisco), ‘with a rise in Smartphone ownership globally, China has the highest number of Smartphone users, 1.3 billion, in 2018, followed by India with 530 million users’. As per The Indian Express Report (2018) currently the number of Smartphone users in India is in between 300-400 million. Out of about 650 million mobile phone users in the country around 300 million have Smartphone. In the next year or so two out of three Indian mobile users are expected to upgrade their phones and the number of smart phone users may rise up to 433 millions. It is reported that the number of internet users in India is expected to reach 450-465 million with an overall internet penetration around 31 per cent in near future.

This spread of technology and internet is to be seconded by appropriate level of knowledge and skill needed to handle technical devices for learning purposes. Of recent the Government of India has launched a new ‘Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana’ (Skill Development Programme). Keeping in view these surveys, the situation in India, especially in urban and semi-urban areas, is quite promising for the future of mobile assisted learning. The situation in rural areas is, on the contrary, not very satisfying due to the lack of basic infrastructure and accessibility to this modern technology. There is an urgent need to strengthen necessary infrastructure to include more rural and remote areas in this mainstream

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 19:8 August 2019

Subodh N. Chinchole

Mobile Assisted Language Learning: Scope and Limitations in Rural and Semi-urban Indian Context

of modern technology so as to increase the scope and spectrum of mobile assisted language learning.

References

Awadhiya, A. K., Anshu Miglani. "Mobile Learning: Challenges for Teachers of Indian Open Universities". *Journal of Learning for Development*. 2016, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. - 35-46

Beatty, K. "Teaching and Researching Computer-Assisted Language Learning," Harlow: Pearson/Longman 2nd ed. 2010

Crompton, H. "A Historical Overview of mobile Learning: Toward Learner-Centered Education." *Handbook of Mobile Learning*. 2013, pp. 3-14

Kukulka-Hulme, Shield, L. "An Overview of Mobile Assisted Language Learning: From Content Delivery to Supported Collaboration and Interaction," *ReCALL*, 20(3), 2008, pp.271-289
