THE IMPACT OF MALL ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Aymen Al-Shaqatha[1]

Abstract

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is deemed one of the most effective tools in language learning. Therefore, the current paper will study its impact on the four major skills of English language; namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition, the paper will investigate MALL's impact on the process of learning grammar and vocabulary as well. The paper starts by providing a definition for the 'M-learning' term taking into consideration the fact that this term is recently introduced and incorporated into the language field of learning and teaching. The researcher evaluates the diverse advantages of MALL such as portability, ubiquity, flexibility, collaboration, and authentic learning. Then the researcher demonstrates with real tangible evidence and case studies conducted across the globe how MALL plays a significant role in helping learners in many aspects in their learning journey. It, for instance, promotes their learning attitude, innovation; reduces their language anxiety, and holds up their interaction, teamwork, and knowledge co-instruction. The researcher then offers a list of the advantages and impacts of MALL on learning the four English language skills urging English language teachers to best utilize this inventive tool of learning that is progressively and ceaselessly developing into the field.

Keywords: *M-Learning (Mobile Learning), MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning), Language Skills, Writing, Reading, Listening, Speaking, Vocabulary, Grammar.*

INTRODUCTION

Mobile learning is one of many other technologies and innovations introduced into the field of language learning. However, M-learning is increasingly developing, and is prevailingly introduced into the field of language learning, thus making itself into a catchphrase of education in the 21st century. All technology-enhanced learning tools have been undergoing tremendous changes, and m-learning is no exception. Those technological learning tools have developed from "e-learning to m-learning and from m-learning to context-aware u- learning," (Hwang, 2010). These mobile technologies have revolutionized everything about our life, not only education. The effects of such technologies can be tracked, besides the learning level, on many other levels stretching from the personal to the social, and from the professional to the learning and educational level. Therefore, mobile learning technologies have remarkably been utilized in the education field. Within the last couple of decades alone, the world has seen the introduction of a whole pact of mobile technologies such as UMPCs (Ultra-Mobile Personal Computers), PDAs (personal digital assistants), iPods, iPads, Kindles, Nooks, and many other versions of elegant smart phones.

Definitions of M-Learning:

As a term, mobile learning (m-learning) has been offered with conventional as well as recent definitions. Conventionally, the term of 'm-learning' has been defined as the use and utility of a number of "portable devices such as mobile phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), tablet computers, and smart phones in learning," (Ahmed, 2015). According to O'Malley, m-learning is "any sort of learning that happens when the learner is not in a fixed, predetermined location, or learning that

[1] Researcher, SRTM University, Nanded.

happens when the learner takes advantage of the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies," (Malley, 2017).

In contrast, unlike the traditional definitions for the term stated above that focus on the importance of the mobility of technology, the most up-to-date definitions for the term 'm-learning' emphasize the importance of the learners' mobility. In that regard, the mobility of learners points to the mobility of "technological means within a certain physical context, the learners' activities, activities involved in the learning process, and the behavior of learners during the use of this technology in their learning," (Cronje, 2010). Therefore, it is observed that the recent definitions for the term 'm-learning' put much stress on learners-oriented aspects such as their "experiences, contexts, movements, informality, and learner-generated contents," (Hulme A. K., 2012). Moreover, the mass production and introduction of those mobile technological devices such as has invited teachers' as well as researchers' attention and interest to accept those technologies as educational tools. This is so because those technological tools provide the learning environment with much desirable chances of personalization, situation, authenticity, spontaneity, ubiquity, and informality.

Accordingly, m-learning as an educational technology refers to the learners' ability to acquire any sort of knowledge by accessing the materials of learning through such mobile technologies. It is through m-learning technologies that learners could have the opportunity of enjoying the mobility of time, space, and technology. That enjoyed mobility will assist learners in achieving their learning goals fruitfully. This technology as well as connectivity mobility will most definitely "enable learners to maximize their time-on-task anytime anywhere, whenever there is time and opportunity to learn," (Steel, Fitting Learning into Life, 2012).

ADVANTAGES OF M-LEARNING

Portability:

Mobile technological devices are small in size and light in weight. That quality is one advantage of them helping learners to take and use them wherever they go, in or outside the classroom whenever their time allows. Therefore, m-learning makes learners "less dependent on time and location of learning," (Zerehkafi, 2013).

Ubiquity:

With this advantage with portable devices on the move, English language learners can have an easy access and smooth interaction with their teachers and peers alike "without either time or place constraints," (Fujimoto, 2012). It follows then that learners have come to realize that the most useful technological devices to be used outside the classroom were the m-learning devices. This is so because learners could accomplish their learning task with an easy, quick, spontaneous, personal, and habitual manner. In addition, the ubiquitous quality of m-learning technologies qualifies learners for learning beyond time or location limits.

Flexibility:

M-learning with its mobile technological devices promotes a flexible learning environment that pays no heed to the "restrictions of age, gender, and geography to participate learning environment," (Hulme A. K., 2012). Consequently, the quality of flexibility achieves the informality and lifelong aspects of learning.

pISSN 2320-9305 eISSN 2347-5706
Volume 6, Issue 1, June 2018

Collaboration:

M-learning through its mobile technological devices also achieves learning collaboration regardless of the learning/learners location. It as well includes "text and rich media as well as voice," (Geddes, 2004). Through m-learning, learners' cognitive as well as social aspects are promoted during the acquisition process. Moreover, using the m-learning technologies encourages learners to share their knowledge, communicate with others, and explore their milieu regardless of time and location. The tools of social media such as Facebook, for example, encourage mutual interaction among students, and with their teachers as well "increasing collaboration in group projects," (Salehi, 2012).

Authentic and situated learning:

Learning can occur in many forms depending on different variants. However, it can be so efficient once its contexts are "meaningful, authentic, and appropriate for learners," (Traxler, 2007). Therefore, m-learning has the potential to provide such an authentic, relevant and interesting surroundings for learners. Facebook as a tool of social media, for instance, encourages learners an authentic interaction of learners with others. It as well provides learners with certain opportunities enabling them to build and process their knowledge via social interactions in a practical environment. Additionally, it establishes a connection between the learners' social life and learning environment. Learners thus have a positively key role to play in the acquisition of knowledge during this process. Those mobile technologies can as well facilitate for learners the production of their own contents such as blogging, publishing personal profiles, and uploading photographs via the use of various sites of social networking.

Personalized learning:

This type of learning refers to learning that "recognizes different learning styles and approaches, social, cognitive and physical differences, and diversity," (Traxler, 2007). With the provision and help of m-learning, learners can have control over their learning process, and its pace as per their cognitive state. Besides mobile technology, wireless technology helps identify the context and history of all individual learners, and provides them learning contents across time and place based on their choosing. As a result, learners not only have control over their learning process, but also become the center of it. In that vein, Steel confirms that language learners in Australia who took part in the research "appreciated the ability of m-learning to promote self-regulated learning and to receive feedback," (Steel, *Students' Perspectives* , 2013).

MALL (MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING)

MALL learning (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) stands for any type of learning that uses mobile technology devices. It is assumed to go back in history to the second half of the first decade of the 21st century. MALL learning is proposed to be different from "computer-assisted language learning in its use of personal, portable devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access and interaction across different contexts of use," (Shield, 2008). MALL learning has thus played a significant role in holding up language learning thanks to its exceptional qualities such as "portability, social interactivity, context sensitivity, connectivity, individuality, and immediacy," (buSa'aleek, 2014). MALL learning style produces a number of positive impacts on improving the major skills of language. Those effects include, but are not limited to, stimulating learners, and encouraging their learning attitudes, reducing their language anxiety, holding up their interactions, and the collaboration and co-instruction of their knowledge.

IMPACT OF MALL ON LANGUAGE SKILLS:

MALL learning style has various impacts on learning language skills. For one thing, it is an efficient tool for learning and developing the learning of the four main skills of English language. It also helps in developing the learning of language vocabulary, and reading comprehension. It is even argued that the majority of MALL's studies pay greater attention to "vocabulary acquisition and speaking skills, while grammar learning and writing skills are underrepresented," (Viberg, 2012).

Learning Vocabulary:

The process of learning a foreign language has its own requirements. Learners have to have the capabilities of memorizing and practicing vocabulary, which is a significant requirement for learning a foreign language. For that reason, mobile technological devices assist learners in their process of learning vocabulary effectively. Through regularly using mobile phones as a mobile device of learning, learners are introduced to various activities such as Short Message Service (SMS). In Japan in 2005, Thornton and Houser conducted a study to contrast and evaluate the value and worth of vocabulary delivery through diverse means such as "SMS on mobile phones, the Web on PC, and paper material," (Thornton, 2005). Through this process, teachers can be able to send, up to three times a day, messages to learners that include vocabulary lessons to be learned. Likewise, Lu conducted another study in Taiwan in 2008, in which the study learners had to receive two messages a day for learning vocabulary, and had to be compared to another group learning vocabulary through paper material. The two studies mentioned above demonstrated that sending phone messages for vocabulary learning proved to be very effective. This new tool of learning has also encouraged learners to study regularly, and provided more exposure leading eventually to the acquisition of more vocabulary. In terms of the learners' performance, the studies also showed that the mobile learners group provided a considerably better performance than the paper group and the Web group.

Listening and Speaking:

Listening and speaking represent two major skills of English language. Mobile phones as mobile learning devices can provide access to those skills for learners. In that regard, the study conducted by Demouy and Kukulska-Hulme in 2010, evaluated that aspect. The study selected two groups of learners. It provided the first group with iPods and MP3 players, and the second group with mobile phones to practice listening and speaking in French, (Hulme V. D., 2010). The study found that mobile devices played an exceedingly efficient role for learners in practicing listening and speaking. Learners accepted and could use iPods and MP3 players as effective language tools. Moreover, the selected learners reported that "listening and speaking activities on mobile phones were challenging but more authentic and realistic, than using DVD-ROMs" (Al-Qasim, 2013). Learners were able to sharpen their listening skills and speed up their oral response skills in French. Additionally, podcasts were reported to have offered more opportunities and flexibility for learners. Learners thus could boost their incentive for learning a foreign language as well.

Learning Grammar:

As one of the language aspects, the impact of mobile phones on the acquisition of grammar has also been examined. Baleghizadeh and Oladrostam conducted a study in 2010, to evaluate "the effect of mobile phones on improving Iranian EFL students' grammatical accuracy," (Baleghizadeh, 2010). They provided the selected learners with three categories of grammar to study in six sessions of instruction. In this study, the experimental group of learners utilized their cells as recording devices for their discussion sessions. The control group, on the other hand, was given conventional grammar

pISSN 2320-9305 eISSN 2347-5706
Volume 6, Issue 1, June 2018

directions. After that, the experimental group was told to go home and do the analyses of their recordings, check any grammatical errors, correct them, and bring their findings to the next class. Bringing the findings of the experimental group to the class would enable learners to share their experiences of the recordings with their peers and get their feedback. In that order, Li and Hegelheimer conducted a study in 2013, to investigate "the effect of using mobile assisted grammar exercise on ESL learners' self-editing skills," (Li, 2013). In this study, the researchers expanded a certain application based on the web and called it Grammar Clinic. Learners then were asked to use such an application for recognizing errors related to sentence level, and for correcting those errors. The findings of the study demonstrated that the application of MALL helped increase self-corrections made by the learners, and reduced the number of errors committed by them in the final sketch. As a result, Grammar Clinic proved to be a valuable tool of learning, according to the learners, that helped them increase their Meta linguistic awareness, and bettered their skills of self-editing in English writing.

Reading Comprehension:

As far as reading skill is concerned, various studies have been conducted to analyze this matter such as Al-seghayer, 2007, 2013; Hazaea & Alzubi, 2016; Lan, Sung, & Chang, 2007, 2013, to mention only some. Those studies investigated the issue of reading skill in "traditional EFL reading activities with mobile technology," (Hazaea, 2016). Respectively, a considerable number of researchers argued that the application of technology in EFL reading "not only increases the learners' motivation, interaction, and thinking skills, but also incorporates authentic material and automatic feedback," (Wang, 2013). The researchers supplied the learners with the reading materials through one of two ways; namely, installing a well-designed learning course on the learners mobile phones, or through SMS. In a Japanese context, Wang and Smith provided the learners at the university level with reading and grammar materials on their mobile phones. The findings of the study showed that the learners perceived that new style of learning positively in their responses and reported having benefited from it and improved their skills in the targeted skills; which are reading and grammar. The advantages of portability and accessibility that the learners enjoyed through their mobile phones met their reading preference and convenience as well.

Writing:

With regard to writing, it is mostly assumed that the writing teaching methods applied previously were conventional, and uninteresting, taking into account the rapid developments of today's world. In that vein, researchers in this respect have suggested the incorporation of m-learning into the academic writing through the application of a number of writing approaches and presenting them in mobile devices. MALL in this regard qualifies learners with the advantage of immediacy in learning, and eliminates the constraints of time and place. Besides, it presents the learners with the opportunities of interacting with their peers and instructors alike, using written messages that are possible with various social applications. A number of social applications "have been used to encourage students to improve their writing such as Google docs, blogs, Voice Thread, and other storytelling tools," (Suwantarathip, 2014).

Today, learners live in a digital world, and enjoy all manifestations of technology. For learners and common people alike, availability of, as well as accessibility to the various Social Networking Services (SNS), has a significant impact on their life. Facebook, as a social network service for example, is deemed by many researchers to be "an effective pedagogical method for L2 writing because it allows peer assessment," (N. Mat Daud, 2011). Their study found that learners' peer

Facebook assessment significantly boosted their "motivation and interests as they had opportunities to construct and refine their knowledge through social interactions in a virtual environment," (ibid). Moreover, it was found out that Facebook has also made easy the process of brainstorming, which in turn pushed the learners' faculty of critical thinking. Smarter and more knowledgeable learners through collaboration with their peers could help those who were less competent or less well versed. Scaffolding promoted the Learners' language proficiency via peer feedback.

CONCLUSION

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has proved to be a significantly effective tool of learning. However, it is difficult to assume that all conventional methods of instruction could be superseded by it. Yet, it still can expand these traditional methods, improve them, and provide answers to many problems related to them. MALL has been found to have enormously improved the major language skills of learning; namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, MALL has proved to boost the other skills of language learning such as vocabulary and grammar. MALL is a unique and efficient style of learning as it enjoys a series of advantages such as portability, ubiquity, flexibility, collaboration, authentic and situated learning, and personalized learning. The findings of the study at hand showed how MALL contributed to the improvement of language learning through promoting the learning attitude and motivation of learners, reducing their anxiety of language, and supporting their interaction, collaboration, and co-instruction. Therefore, the researcher of the current paper highly recommends the use and application of MALL by teachers of all languages, more specifically English, in their instruction.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, M. D. (2015). Can Smartphones Pave the Path towards EFLCompetence for Saudi College Students? *Education and Linguistics Research*, 120-44.

Al-Qasim, H. A.-F. (2013). From Call to Mall: The Effectiveness of Podcast on EFL Higher Education Students' Listening Comprehension. *English Language Teaching*, 30-41.

Baleghizadeh, E. O. (2010). The Effect of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on Grammatical Accuracy of EFL Students. *MEXTESOL Journal*, 1-10.

buSa'aleek, A. O. (2014). A Review of Emerging Technologies: Mobile Assisted Language Learning. *Asia Journal of Educational Training*, 469-473.

Cronje, M. O.-H. (2010). Defining Mobile Learning in the Higher Education Landscape. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12-21.

Fujimoto, C. (2012). Perception of Mobile Language Learning in Australia: How Ready are Learners to Study on the Move? . *The JALT CALL Journal*, 165-195.

Geddes, S. J. (2004). Mobile Learning in the 21st Century: Benefit to Learners. N. pag.

Hazaea, A. A. (2016). The Effectiveness of Using Mobile on EFL Learners' Reading Practices in Najran University . *English Language Teaching*, 8-21.

Hulme, A. K. (2012, February 5). Mobile Learning and the Future of Learning. (K. P. Blessinger, Interviewer)

Hulme, V. D. (2010). On the Spot: Using Mobile Devices for Listening and Speaking Practice on a French Language Programme. *Open Learning*, 217-232.

pISSN 2320-9305 eISSN 2347-5706
Volume 6, Issue 1, June 2018

Hwang, G. Z. (2010). A Key Step to Understanding Paradigm Shifts in E-Learning: Towards Context-Aware Ubiquitous Learning. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 41-2.

Li, V. H. (2013). Mobile-Assisted Grammar Exercises: Effects on Self-Editing in L2 Writing. *Language Learning & Technology*, 135-156.

Malley, O. (2017). Guidelines for Learning/Teaching/Tutoring in a Mobile Environment. 6.

N. Mat Daud, W. R. (2011). Developing Arabic writing skills using Facebook. 1-7.

Salehi, M. M. (2012). Yunus, M.The Effectiveness of Facebook Groups on Teaching and Improving Writing: Students' Perceptions. *International Journal of Education and Information Technologies*, 87-96.

Shield, A. K. (2008). An Overview of Mobile Assisted Language Learning: From Content Delivery to Supported Collaboration and Interaction . *RECALL*, 271-289.

Steel, C. (2012). Fitting Learning into Life. *Language Students' Perspectives on Benefits of Using Mobile aApps*, 875-880.

Steel, C. (2013). Students' Perspectives on the Benefits of Using Mobile Apps for Learning Languages . *Glasgow*, 310-313.

Suwantarathip, S. W. (2014). The Effects of Collaborative Writing Activity Using Google Docs on Students' Writing Abilities. *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 148-156.

Thornton, C. H. (2005). Using Mobile Phones in English Education in Japan. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 217-228.

Traxler, J. (2007). Designing for Mobile and Wireless Learning . *Rethinking Pedagogy for the digital age: Designing and Delivering E-Learning*, 180-192.

Viberg, A. G. (2012). Mobile Assisted Language Learning . *A Literature Review In 11th World Conference on Mobile and Contextual Learning*, 1-8.

Wang, S. S. (2013). Reading and Grammar Learning Through Mobile Phones. *Language Learning & Technology*, 117-134.

Zerehkafi, Y. M. (2013). Mobile Learning for Education: Benefits and challenges . *International Journal of Computational Engineering Research*, 93-101.