

Opening the Doors for Mobile Assisted Language Learning Mobile Apps for ESL: Value and Methods*

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أهمية وأساليب استخدام الهواتف والتطبيقات الذكية في تعليم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية لدى طلاب الجامعات ملخص:

يهدف هذا البحث الوصفي إلى إظهار أهمية استخدام الهواتف الذكية في تعليم اللغة الانجليزية بوصفها لغة ثانية، علاوة على توضيح فعالية وكفاءة هذا الاسلوب باعتباره محفزاً قويا للمتعلمين يجلب البيئة الخارجية للمتعلم إلى داخل البيئة التعليمية الصفية، وكما يؤكد انفرادية كل متعلم، مع المحافظة على مفهوم العمل الجماعي بالإضافة الى ذلك، فإن هذا البحث يركز على الأهمية لاعتبار توظيف التطبيقات الذكية حجر أساس في تعليم اللغة الانجليزية؛ بسبب توفر هذه التطبيقات وحجم تأثيرها. وقد أثبتت هذه الفرضيات من خلال عرض بعض النظريات والدراسات نحو Dual Coding Theory والـ Working Memory Model والـ Rational Analysis of Mobile Education.

كما عرض هذا البحث بعض النماذج الجامعية، لتطبيق استخدام الهواتف الذكية في تعليم اللغة الانجليزية ونتائجها. وقد خلصت هذه الورقة البحثية إلى الكشف عن العديد من الإيجابيات في تعزيز مخرجات التعليم وتحسين إيجابية البيئة التعليمية، بالإضافة إلى الحد من خسارة الوقت والجهد. كما أنها تضمن تعلماً أفضل للمفردات الجديدة. على الرغم من ذلك، تبقى بحاجة للمزيد من الأبحاث لدراسة أفضل الطرق التعليمية من أجل تفعيل دور الهواتف الذكية والتطبيقات لتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية والبحث عن محدداتها لإيجاد أفضل الطرق التي تمكن المعلمين من تحمل مسؤولياتهم الجديدة التي تلائم التعليم الفعال الحديث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: صفوف تعليم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، الهواتف أو التطبيقات الذكية، الدافعية، أسلوب تعلم.

Abstract:

This descriptive paper aims at pointing out the importance of utilizing mobiles in teaching English as a second language. Moreover, it presents the efficiency of m-learning, or Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), as a powerful motivator that brings the outside

reality to English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, and it ensures students' individuality while keeping up the team work. Furthermore, it focuses on embracing applications or apps as a cornerstone in teaching English for their broad availability, deep action and prolonged effect. This has been proved by discussing the Dual Coding theory, the Working Memory Model and the Frame of the Rational Analysis of Mobile Education (FRAME). Also, some models were displayed to show real experience in applying m-learning in teaching English as a second language at university level. The paper concluded that MALL has many qualities that can enhance the learning outcomes, elevates the positivity of the class environment and reduce time and connectivity waste. Besides, it guarantees better vocabulary acquiring and practicing. However, more research on the methodology of employing mobiles and Apps in teaching English and its limitations is still badly needed so as to help educators take responsibilities of their new roles in such classes.

Key words: MALL, m-learning, Apps, smartphones, student- centered.

1.1 Introduction

Many researchers have aimed at shedding the lights on using technology as a pedagogical method to teach English as a second language. Some have started forty years ago addressing the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), after people started integrating the Internet in their classrooms as a revolutionary step in the world of education. It had not been long until the humanity was shocked again with the invention of mobiles and then smartphones that enabled people to achieve a variety of developments that were thought to be impossible years ago. Smartphones made conferences less expensive and time consuming, clinical advices more affordable and understandable, politics more readable and available, and made education richer, deeper, cheaper, faster, and most of all closer to our students. This great advance came to ground as a result of the simple options available in mobiles and the market of apps. Applications have gifted the existence of education and knowledge a marvelous blessing; a key to bridge the distance

between the generations and to bring something real from the students' real life to the classroom environment. Experiments have proven the power of owning ; a little boy in the kindergarten is always "happier", which means more motivated, willing, and opened to new ideas and suggestions, if allowed to bring his toy with him. Consequently, a modern student-centered classroom should allow smartphones as the first step in improving the teaching it has, and then fulfilling the matter of the MALL, or the Mobile Assisted Language Learning for what it has of significant positives. This, naturally, needs planning and much thinking before applied in order to ascertain the maximum benefits with the minimum costs.

In *School Rebooted* by Hess and Saxberg (2014), the writers believe that educators must think as engineers since these people are the best problem solvers. However, educators are actually super problem solvers, because they simply deal with real people with different characters, ideologies, backgrounds and abilities which finally form a special receptive style for each one of them. A teacher spends nights imagining and designing scenarios for his or her next lesson trying to find out the best way that lessens the distance between that new lesson and the students, and the difference among the individuals. Nowadays, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) and especially smartphones have become an inseparable common part of students' lives, they gain knowledge in various fields, and ingrate their best moments on those gadgets which proved that they are part of their existence. They chat; check their emails, read, send messages, research data, take pictures and notes using these tools. However, it is still common to ask students to leave these gadgets outside classroom by asking them not to use them as being a major distracter and time waster. In fact, this is the biggest mistake any teacher can make, because in this way they are being asked to get rid of an essential part of their personalities, hence, a wide door for any teacher to send information through is being closed. Smartphones and PDAs are priceless tools that can help the teacher effectively in their classroom

(Chinnery, 2006; Sharples,2009).

Most modern learning perspectives

concentrate on the ubiquity of learning as an omniscient power that happens all the time and in all places. So, according to these definitions, learning is best fulfilled if smartphones are used in classrooms, since these magical gadgets will help teachers and students to keep up with the environment and employ it to its most. According to this definition, part of learning is to use all the coming ups in the classroom. Many have actually realized this fact and took advantage of it. One of the earliest attempts was in 1988 by Twarog and Pinter ,when they communicated with their distant students language learners with traditional telephones. In 1996, a course was taught from Hawaii Brigham Young University to Tonga via telephone (Chinnery, 2006).

That was followed by Chinnery's research in 2006 in which he coined the MALL term for Mobile Assisted Language Learning. On the other hand, many have argued that mobiles' small screens, slow systems, complicated keyboards, and expensive cost are some of the elements that make computers better assisting tools. Recently, academics do not need research to prove that they are, if not better, at least as same as practical as computers. It is believed that with the new big touch screens, high resolutions, ease of use, smart systems, cheap prices, availability everywhere, and Internet capability, smartphones have proven their ability to achieve many tasks in different fields of life.

Research questions:

The question that stay standing is how to use smartphones and specially apps in teaching English as a second language ; how does it affect the teacher's role in classroom and how does it reshape the content of the curriculum. Another important question would be whether there is any connection with the students' background, social status, or abilities and the efficiency of using mobiles in ESL. Allowing those gadgets into any classroom needs to be analyzed well in order to be used efficiently. So, looking through the approaches on how and when to use m-learning purposefully to serve the teacher's pedagogical objectives, and how it can change the curriculum of the course are some of the major issues relating to using mobiles in classrooms as teaching

methods. Furthermore, the limitations that should be understood and encountered are also essential to the field of studying this new method.

1.2 Why Mobile Learning?

Smartphones came in hand for all people and caused many changes in several fields. People started keeping track of their health, news, economics, education, people living in their small circle and those living around the globe. This breakthrough had necessarily affected the way learners sense and respond to their surroundings, especially that they started conveying their feelings in a techno-digital way; symbols became very expressive and short pauses in online chatting rooms became meaningful. Neglecting this marvelous fact and keeping those magical devices away from any given classroom is only a very big loss a teacher can cause, especially when examining their effectiveness in teaching English as a second language.

First, the mobility that smartphones possess is very crucial in the learning process. EL-Hussein and Cronje (2010) linked the term “mobility” to three different areas in education. The first is the mobility of technology, which is very vivid when looking at the way mobiles, PDAs, laptops, tablets ...etc. access the Internet and connects with satellites. This allows them to be used anywhere and everywhere on the planet. A learner can access the internet outside classroom easily and contact the teacher or find the material he or she needs. This fact has led to the idea of “flipped classroom” which was found in 2004 by two teachers from Colorado: Bergmann and Sams. Flipped Classroom is based on giving the materials to the students to study at home before dealing with it with their teachers; they watch a video or listen to a recording by the teacher explaining the new lesson. After that, they come to class only to practice what they learnt at home or to ask questions. This technique saves much time and guarantees the involvement of students in the material given. Clearly, based on Darmofal’s statement that: “Lectures are relatively ineffective in delivering information. Rather material ought to be used to process and reinforce the information used” (Kim, Altmann, Ilon, 2012, p.5), flipped classroom was proved to

have a wider influence and academic basis than it thought to have. Kim , Altmann and Ilon (2012) led an innovative experiment on Seoul National University using a web-based approach. They managed to send the material to students before classroom, and achieved the best understanding of the course material in class time. Of course, bearing in mind the very limited time and setting of classrooms, and the load students have each semester makes it very good idea to apply such a method, because it helps them to occupy the time they have outside the campus.

Not only that it reduces time waste, but also mobile phones can guarantee the learners’ individuality and productivity, that is the mobility of the learner. MALL can help students learn independently outside classroom; according to Jones and Issrrof (2007): “Ownership is often highlighted as a key motivational factor but can refer to ownership of the learning or of learning products. In the context of mobile devices it also refers to physical ownership of the devices and their personal nature” (2007, p.248). Furthermore, it can also help students with low self-esteem and those who are shy to speak English in front of others since it removes the formality of the learning experience (Sulaiman, 2011). Circular writing including SMS, MMS, emails, and micro blogging also help those students to overcome their inner fear of using English in public. On the other hand, the mobility of learning itself gives the floor for other sociable students who enjoy learning in a collaborative environment to practice their leadership and solidify their personalities while acquiring language. This correlation given by El-Hussein and Cronje (2010) was preceded by another focus on mobility ;(kukilska-hulme, 2007; 2009; Sharples, 2006; Traxler,2007) proposing that mobility needs to be understood not only in terms of spatial movement, but also the ways in which such movement may enable time-shifting and boundary-crossing.

Another factor is that m-learning offers learners a chance to have a hands-on experience, which agrees with the Dual Cognitive theory that states that the more senses involved in the learning process the longer it stays in the long-term memory. According to Mayer and Sims (1994), when learners, for example, use verbal

and visual processing together learning is more effective. Based on this, Chen, Hsieh and Kinshuk (2008) argued that :“We therefore hypothesize providing multi-sensory learning content by combining written and pictorial annotations will have a differential effect on the learning performance of students with different verbal and visual abilities” (2008,p.95). They experienced teaching vocabulary using mobiles and proved that it did help students with higher verbal and/or visual ability.

Obviously, any given mobile has at least an alarm, a recorder, a camera, a note taking and to-do-list options, an SMS and MMS sending and receiving even if not equipped with internet connection. Having internet on mobiles and tablets widens those options to micro blogging, researching, free calling, free chatting , and downloading hundreds of up-to-date applications that deals with different aspects of knowledge. As English teachers, it would be a loss not to use these qualities to help our students organize material and manage their time and tasks through their mobiles. For example, recording an interview between two students in English would be the simplest idea to apply using these mobiles and the most exciting for the students!

Finally, MALL highly motivates learners because it gives them a substitute setting for learning language than the traditional, sometimes, boring whiteboard and teacher. It makes them their own teachers for a while, which stimulates their responsibility and raises their awareness about many causes around. Using their mobiles to do a research, revise a lecture, or prepare a presentation opens the doors for infinite knowledge that one teacher in a limited time and space cannot give. “Using real world resources for teaching and learning in the classroom can make education more meaningful and relevant to our students” (Mcneal and Hooft, 2006, p.1).

They will be exposed to a variety of broad information around them; this actually motivates them to find reasons behind facts and to find their passion for knowledge. The small mobiles they have in their pockets can trigger their inner willingness to exceed our expectations, and to learn for the sake of knowing rather than

graduating, if given the chance. Eventually, this all goes for the benefit of the class itself, because students will bring the outside environment into their classes; when asked they can only tip tap their screens and find the answers the teacher is looking for. Some people, however, think that in this way students will forget information easily because they are not going for libraries digging in hundreds of books to find the suitable answers, well, this is not actually the case for many reasons. To start with, the system in online libraries saves time, and it is very rich. Besides that, online libraries offer many choices of resources to find the answer for the question acquired . Then, one has to think about the current generation who does appreciate technological devices and finds them very valuable. Indeed, touching the tablet or the mobile phone is not enough to find the answer for the question needed; a student needs to know the skills of searching such as the keywords and the authentic resources and many other elements before moving it to a note-taking application that saves the information in a very organized way.

As for the advantages of the apps on mobiles, they are unlimited. Before investigating them, from the learner’s perspective, it would be a very good way to find out those advantages. So, if a student wants to look for an application that teaches English vocabulary, the first thing to do is to search the market on Apple Store or Play Store using some key words, such as: learning English vocabulary, play with words, or maybe simply: words. Then, a list of tens of suggestions will appear on that screen. The next step is that the user checks the app so to make sure that it’s academic enough. Until now, all is safe, private, secure, easy and quick. The ratings of the app can help decide whether it is helpful enough or not, and the pictures and description give a clear idea about it. After choosing an application and downloading it ,which takes no more than 5 minutes, the learner starts to check it and see if he or she likes it or not. The decision must depend on the feeling of comfort, the design of the app, the easiness of using it, and how much it challenges them. Well, this tells that downloading an application is not as blind and random as some people might think. This can be also be ensured by giving the students some instructions on how to choose the best app and measure the authenticity of the data it offers.

Hence, apps in general are very user-friendly and personal, this provides a very relaxing atmosphere for students to learn and acquire knowledge the way they find the most suitable. Most applications are not only very interactive and colorful, they are also very stimulating, because they have more than one level that the user must pass. It can be a game or a very simple competition or a pre-designed quiz that shows the user their mistakes and the correct answers. Apps are very challenging and motivating, the user cannot pass to the next level if not proven that they learnt their mistake after which he or she is given a reward. Having to repeat the same experience is very useful for acquiring the word since many theories propose that: "Distributed practice is superior than massed practice" (Houser & Thornton, 2005), also recent research concerning the brain and learning indicated that learning new words or concepts requires multiple experiences, giving repeated practice and exposure, so that the neural network for the word can be developed and strengthened" (Houser & Thornton, 2005).

To put it simply, apps are free teachers for all students from all social classes, especially that smartphones are relatively affordable and actually in hand for all students, even those coming from a poor background. Smartphones compared to a PC are generally cheaper and can serve the same as a PC for any normal college student. It appears very tempting to parents when they know that many apps on smartphones are designed by iconic institutions, such as the British Council, BBC, and many other international universities. This gives their sons or daughters a chance to learn what they cannot afford in any of these institutions.

2. Literature Review

In fact, many educators saw the correct path to employ mobiles in teaching language and conducted many studies on their students to verify its effectiveness through many methods that all poured in the MALL or the Mobile Assisted Language Learning.

2.1 Theories

The first person who coined the term MALL for mobile assisted language learning

was Chinnery in 2006, he presented some of the pioneer ventures for using mobiles in education proving its validity in serving the main objectives of teaching. He was followed by Chen, Hsieh and Kinshuk in 2008, who shed the light on MALL by clarifying the relationship between the Learning Content Representation (LCR), the Dual Coding theory, and the Working Memory Model. They explained their experiment based on remarkable cognition theories and on the Psychological Learning Process theory. Alavi and Leinder (2001) pointed out the importance of this process which includes, according to Chen, Hsieh and Kinshuk: observation, attention, identification, transformation and memorization. The researchers assumed that the best model to use for the cognitive information processing is Atkinson & Shiffrin's (1968) called the Multi-Score model, which proposes that there are three types of memory: Sensor, Short-term and Long-term memory. Of course, many previous researches proved that the second language vocabulary learning depends to a great extent on the short term memory (Geva & Rayan, 1993; Harrington & Sawyer, 1992). Then, they linked that to a different representation of the Working Memory Model by Baddeley (2003) that classifies the STM into three essential sections; the Central executive, the Fluid systems and the Crystallized systems. The value of this model is that it presents the short term memory not as a mere store place but rather as a working memory that deals with different data based on how it has been introduced to the learner. Researchers then connected that to the Level of Processing Theory which poses and suggests that data can live longer in the Long term memory if it involves a deeper level of processing. Next, they discussed the Dual Coding theory which also states that learning is more effective when learners use more than one sensory modality, (Chen, Hsieh, and Kinshuk, 2008). Based on that, Chen and the researchers decided to assign the subjects to four groups according to their different STM abilities.

The results proved the power of presentation, which emphasizes the importance of using apps on mobiles to help a variety of students who have different processing abilities to store more vocabulary easily. First, it was proved that all students with higher visual ability could benefit from pictorial presentations and they could

benefit from pictorial and written combined representation. Second, students with higher verbal ability could benefit from the written annotations, and could attain the same with the pictorial and written combined presentations. Unfortunately, those with lower verbal and visual abilities could not really benefit from any type of presenting, maybe using advanced apps like the ones available now that use auditory presentation could have benefited them slightly.

Basoglu and Akdemir (2010) compared between introducing vocabulary to learners using flashcards and mobile phones. They found that : “ Not only did mobile phones improve students’ vocabulary learning, but students also showed positive attitudes towards the use of mobile phones for English vocabulary learning”(2010, p.5). Indeed, Thornton and Houser (2005) have compared the results of two groups in two experiments; one receiving the words through an app called Learning on the Move, and the other was receiving the words in posts on a mobile-supported website. In the other experiment, vocabulary was given on paper for one group and for the other on LOTM (Learning on the Move). It appeared that the group that received words through the LOTM gained a bigger amount of words. However, a survey showed that both groups felt positively about learning using their mobiles. But it proved to the researchers that using a designed educational material mobile-oriented benefited the students and they had positive attitude towards it.

Although the students showed less usage of webs on mobiles, they evaluated the educational material that is designed for mobile phones positively. In other words, they preferred the educational apps rather than the random websites. Indeed, their research has shown that students were not bothered by reading through small screens, as rich multimedia could catch their attention effectively.

The Framework for the Rational Analysis of Mobile Education (FRAME) model gives some insights into the effectiveness of mobile learning and how it would collaborate with the curriculum itself. It illustrates the relationship between the learner, the device, the society and the way

they all intersect to form the mobile learning, as a natural result. The (D) aspect symbolizes all the physical features a mobile has, while the (L) aspect takes into account the learner’s prior knowledge, memorizing ability and feelings. As for the (S) aspect, it relates to the social interactions, conversations and cooperation. The intersections that are formed out of this formula are the device usability, the social technology, and the interaction learning. To begin with, the device usability terms the cognitive skills with the mobile characteristics, such as the portability and psychological comfort. Coming to the second, the social technology intersection frames the style of communication provided by the technology. Explaining that, Koole (2009) wrote: “Mobile devices enable communication and collaboration amongst multiple individuals and systems; device hardware and software provide various means of connectivity” (p.34). While the interaction learning reflects this model’s ability to portrait according to Kool (2009): “Learning and instructional theories, but relies very heavily upon the philosophy of social constructivism” (p36). In other words, learning is collaborative and stresses the social interaction, while presenting the learning communities with a situated cognition. This intersection brings forth a new essential junction: The Mobile learning Process. This implies the learner’s ability to navigate knowledge in their own way, and select information authentically and accurately.

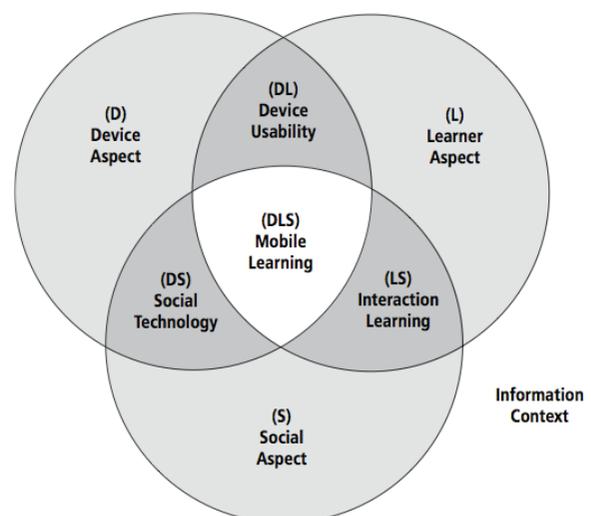


FIGURE 1 The FRAME Model

2.2 Models

A study was applied in Jeddah Community College by Ahmad (2013), aimed at ascertaining the validity and effectiveness of using internet capable mobiles in learning and memorizing vocabulary. This study found that students who had galaxy mobiles, iPhones or iPods acquired the linguistic skills faster than those who did not have. 80% of the students agreed that internet mobile phones will have an important control on learning English in the near future, while 70% believed that materials for learning English should be developed and uploaded on Internet for mobile phones, and 94% were sure that bilingual dictionaries must be downloaded on these mobiles. Not only that they agreed on these statements, but also they showed a very good achievement after following a MALL experience. Those Saudi students could exceed those who followed the traditional method twice (Ahmad, 2013).

Another study conducted by Amari in Sultan Qaboos University in 2011 showed that 30.77% said they used their mobiles for learning English directly every day, while 31.87% said they used it a few times a week and only 18 % said they hardly do. It also showed that 95% of students believed that mobiles can be used in teaching English language while only 5% found that it cannot be useful in learning English.

In 2012, Kim, Altmann, and Ilon published a paper that reflected a study they conducted in a major Korean university. They surveyed the type of apps students used and downloaded on their mobiles in order to learn English. It showed that they used apps for translation and dictionary 13%, document viewer 7%, books 4%, Web searching 11%, Media (newspaper, radio, TV):11%. The results in general mirrored the students' curiosity about their surroundings.

3. Apps in Education

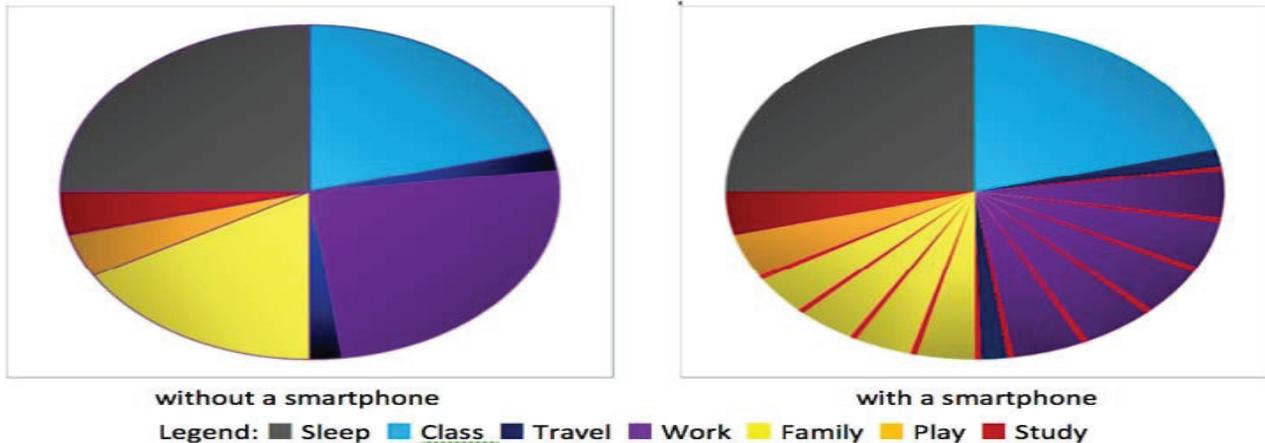
3.1 The Teacher's Role in Utilizing Apps in ESL Classrooms

The environment of learning that the teacher draws includes many factors; the class setting, the curriculum and content, and the kind of relationship he or she has with their students. Accordingly, there should be specific criteria when choosing which application to utilize in your classroom. Naturally, a teacher uses the application that serves their course, class, or activity intended objectives, which is related to the content or the curriculum. This could be deliberately achieved by the dozens of applications available on smartphones and tablets, and by the wise creative design of the activity that fulfils the aim of the lesson. This design of course necessitates the teacher to reshape their class setting, to paraphrase, and to plan their lesson in a timeline that suits the original purposes and the application. To make it clear for those opposing applications in classrooms, Apps in general are very flexible and a teacher can choose how to do what and when very easily. In brief, utilizing applications in classroom is just like considering any other activity or aid; it only needs good planning and preparing to produce the best learning outcomes.

3.1.1 How to Choose the Academic Purpose-Serving Apps?

Many researchers investigated the criteria by which the educator can choose best applications. Zilber (2013) illustrated how to find the "Wheat amidst the chaff" as she titled it. The first standard was that the application should be designed in small segments, meaning that it can provide the user a complete experience in a short time. She found that students tend to study more

continuously without having mobiles, while with smartphones they tend to study in segment in a prolonged time session.



This proves that gaining information using smartphones or technological devices is not as vague and not meaningful as some argue, otherwise students wouldn't have used it for many different times daily. This also shows that it does motivate them and engage them, which is the second standard that Zilber chose. She found that an application is working best when it is addictive, engaging and entertaining at the same time. Of course, this is very obvious in applications that teach language using games. Any teacher knows that fun is good to boost the students' achievement and trap their attention whatever their age is. When people are in good psychological status they concentrate more and absorb more information. This shouldn't conflict with the fact that the application should be academically focused and enrich the material given in class. All of that can be seen in many applications that teach speaking, pronunciation, sentence structure and many others. Zilber says: "The best apps don't try to do everything...unlike desktop application users, smartphone users don't want one application that does everything: they want lots of little applications, each of which does one thing well" (2013, p.5). Not to forget that the developer of the application must be native English speaker or, at least, very proficient in English. This can help learners to live a semi-English environment that invokes their abilities to use English in public.

3.1.2 Time Management

Some educators hypothesize that utilizing m-learning can only be a waste of class time and efforts, as being a major distracter and energy consuming. Actually, as much as it might look right, looking closely would prove that using mobiles could reduce time and effort waste if planned well. It might be the hardest part of all; managing your class time in a novel way that incorporates mobile learning, but it is what makes your class be perfect and very productive.

In fact, m-learning and Apps utilizing can reduce time wasted on connectivity, that is the time that a teacher loses when trying to bond and connect with students. It minimizes the distance and saves time. Also, as Rattray (2013) explained, MALL is the perfect solution for information and teaching waste. Mobiles create an information-centered classroom for it provides a very rich informative environment; they offer a more challenging language context that is full of new vocabulary. Moreover, it reduces teaching waste which all teachers have to bear in any activity they apply in our classes. For example, when teachers gives their students a group activity it is almost impossible to know or hear all the students' output and ideas, or the process they went through to get to their final decisions. Nevertheless, there are many apps that create a digital classroom that all students elaborate in while the teacher observes their suggestions and ideas very clearly. Time

management in such classes is much easier and wiser than traditional classrooms, because the class becomes the place that is elaborated on in digital classes. The teacher can take advantage of using this additional space and time very professionally.

3.1.3 How to Utilize Apps and m-learning

Getting acquainted with smartphones is the first thing a teacher has to do in order to use in classrooms. In addition, they have to keep balance between depending on these magical devices and on their pedagogy; which brings forward motivation and assessment. A teacher using MALL must make sure that he or she is motivating and stimulating students' appetite to learn English, so they can depend on them to learn on their own outside classroom using mobiles..

Tai (2012) wrote a very distinguished inspiring task-based paper on "Contextualizing a MALL". The researcher employed mobiles in a very simple scenario about a burglary committed in a museum and foreign international agents came to help in investigating the case. The students had to "investigate" and interview "suspects" using English, and using some hints sent on their mobiles in authentic English language. Of course, this activity was reported using mobile phones and the students showed very deep interest in playing that game while learning the new words. They were observed to be very engaged in the task willingly and enthusiastically.

This activity would appear ridiculous for some, and of course it would have been not the researcher had planned it in details well. First, there was a pre-task phase at which the task was introduced including the instructions, the objectives and the motivators. Second came the main task phase which aimed at practicing students' ability to read and write through spotting the differences found in a portrait, locating the place using a map that has been found, decoding and SMS and checking some items missing. Their ability to listen and speak was practiced also through interviewing the witnesses, and listening to an MP3 recorded important information about the crime. All the hints ; the portrait, the map, the items and all

others were sent via SMS , MMS or stored on their mobiles before giving the device to them.

This is only one example of what a creative teacher can experience using smartphones. It would be the simplest and cheapest idea to send to the college students some vocabulary and sample sentences during the day using WhatsApp or Viber. A teacher can attach a sketch that symbolizes the word or any annotation he or she finds suitable. Another simple idea would be to take pictures and use them as a trigger for essay writing, discussion, or a warmer for any reading comprehension.

3.2 Apps to Use in ESL

As has been noted, the apps market is stuffed with different kinds of apps that serve the purpose of learning. Of course, each app can be employed in a unique way that the educator specifies according to the circumstances, this makes apps very flexible. Using the best app is only up to the educator and his or her own creativity and perspective. For example, there are many apps that can serve reading skills, such as Learnist, Flipboard, CNN, and Yahoo News Digest. The first two apps are very interesting, because the articles and news are all presented up to the user's main interests, for he or she gets to choose what to appear in the feeds for the user. Similarly, CNN and Yahoo New Digest present the latest news in different areas, and they provide notifications for the user to remember checking them two or three times a day. This might offer much more frequency than that offered by the class that ends in 50 minutes. Besides reading apps, many interesting academic apps aim at teaching vocabulary, such as GRE vocabulary, Vocabulary Builder, Fun Easy Earning, English Vocabulary and Word Learners all of which present a variety of useful words with exercises and many levels that the user has to pass. A very nice app I find very productive is Vocabulary Notes because it is like building the user's own dictionary with the word family, meaning and sentence example.

Other apps deal with writing skills, starting from very simple making sentences apps to brainstorming and planning apps ,such as Mindomo and Simple Mind Free, moving to essay writing teaching apps that give instructions

on topics and skills for academic essays writing. Grammar apps are also various, Noun Plus ,English Grammar ,Johny Grammar and English Verbs Reference are apps that teach grammar very attractively.

How to Speak, English Speaking and English Conversation also can be downloaded from app-stores are apps that have many videos and very interactive exercises. These apps can motivate the learner to use language by providing a proper cultural context.

4. Limitations of MALL

Like any other technique, MALL has some limitations because it has been proven that it is affected by many variables, such as the social and financial status of the learner, and sometimes, the nature of the curriculum. Usually, students with lower financial status are not exposed to technological modern tools compared to their peers from higher status. Not only that, but it was observed that usually students from rural backgrounds do not have the same technological skills as their peers from cities. Furthermore, Aamri (2011) found that: "There are striking differences in the role of technology in wealthier school districts compared with poorer school districts and that there are clear generational differences among teachers when it comes to their comfort with technology and its use in their classrooms". This finding displays the impact of some individual characteristics on MALL, however, group work, and well-designed activities can control and restrict this problem.

The price of these smart devices is another problem that must be considered. Also, the possibility for these mobiles to be misplaced, stolen or corrupted makes it risky to completely depend on. But, backing up information on emails is an option added in almost all apps (Mehta,2012). In addition, Beatty (2003) believes that putting such a big effort in "unproven technology" is a mere waste. However, all educators know that every new idea is a risk until proving its value, and without risks, education would be losing its main goal of innovation.

5. Conclusion

In the final analysis, apps in classrooms can be very helpful despite their limitations, which if compared with its advantages seem almost none. After manifesting m-learning as an essential, required, and productive pedagogy for teaching English as a second language, considering apps to leap from traditional classes, which might have the possibility of time and connectivity waste, to alternative classes cuts down all possible chances of waste. Moreover, it emphasizes the learners' rule in their own education.

6. Recommendations

Obviously, research in mobile learning in teaching English has elicited its powerful results on Language learners, which emphasizes the need to quarry it deeper in relation to the methodology that can be approached to employ it. Also, looking for ways that can minimize its limitations and downsides would be very gainful for ESL, and can bring forth many unexpected outcomes

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