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تعليم اللغة بمساعدة المحمول في تدريس الكتاب المدرسي

هبة احمد كريم

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MALL Technology in Teaching English Language to College Students

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ABSTRACT

This study is conducted to investigate the effect of mobile assisted language learning (MALL) applications as a supplementary learning material for teaching English language to college students. Technological developments with the adoption of mobile multimedia devices and applications have translated into huge opportunities for English as a foreign language (EFL).

(Kukulka ,2006:295) says the world is changing at high speed, people are moving from an industrial economy to one that is media-driven and based on information.

The role of English is quite important in Iraq as a developing country. Emergence of new technologies, especially the internet, has resulted in a major



transition in terms of business, education, science, and technological progress (Chinnery, 2006: 16).

MALL is an educational technology for mobile teaching English language. It is designed to seamlessly bring together functionalities of mobile devices, the Learning Management System (LMS) and the need of close connection between teachers and students.

Using MALL as a pedagogical technique will help the students get a comprehensive understanding of the content of materials in second language learning and provides novel opportunities for teaching language.

It is hypothesized that Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is more effective in teaching English language.

الملخص

أجريت هذه الدراسة لفحص تأثير تطبيقات تعلم اللغة بمساعدة المحمول (MALL) كمواد تعليمية تكميلية لتدريس اللغة الإنكليزية لطلاب الجامعات. وترجمت التطورات التكنولوجية مع اعتماد أجهزة وتطبيقات الوسائط المتعددة المتنقلة إلى فرص هائلة للغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL).

وقد ذكرت الباحثة (Kukulska، 295:2006) إن العالم يتغير بسرعة عالية، فالناس ينتقلون من اقتصاد صناعي إلى اقتصاد يعتمد على الإعلام ويستند إلى المعلومات.

كما ان دور اللغة الإنكليزية مهم جدا في العراق كدولة نامية. أدى الى ظهور التقنيات الحديثة، وخاصة الإنترنت، و ادى إلى تحول كبير من حيث الأعمال والتعليم والعلوم والتقدم التكنولوجي كما ذكر في هذا المصدر(Chinnery, 2006: 16).

MALL هي تكنولوجيا تعليمية لتدريس اللغة الإنكليزية. وهي مصممة لتجميع وظائف الأجهزة المحمولة، ونظام إدارة التعلم بسلاسة، والحاجة إلى اتصال وثيق بين المعلمين والطلاب.

وان استخدام MALL كطريقة تعليمية سيساعد الطلبة على اكتساب شامل لمحتوى المواد في تعلم اللغة الثانية ويوفر فرصاً جديدة لتدريس اللغة.

فهذا يشير الى أن تعلم اللغة بمساعدة المحمول (MALL) أكثر فاعلية في تعليم اللغة الإنكليزية.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the Problem and its Significance

Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) has recently become a popular topic of interest as a sub-branch of computer assisted language learning (CALL) in teaching and learning second or foreign languages.

Studies have, so far, investigated several aspects and issues related to MALL. The first attempt to use MALL in teaching was discussed by Brown (2001), which revealed that MALL was not perceived differently from CALL at that time. Later, another study discussed the differences between MALL and CALL. Apart from definitional aspects, studies have so far investigated the effect of MALL in developing different skills. The potential of using a mobile phone to access the Internet in order to improve EFL listening skills (Nah & et al, 2008:333), and the opportunities to develop English pronunciation by using MALL (Saran & et al, 2009:100) have been looked into, and several other studies have been conducted to see the effect of MALL on teaching vocabulary in general (Thornton & Houser, 2005:230).

In addition to these, the correlation between MALL and motivation to improve EFL proficiency (Nah & et al, 2008: 334) has been among the major studies conducted about MALL. Some of these studies have dealt with MALL as a substitute for conventional learning materials or coursebooks, and as a distance learning tool.

This study, therefore, aims to contribute not only to the literature, but also to educational practices by eliciting evidence for the practical uses and the effect of MALL in EFL classes as a supplementary material in foreign language classrooms. The potential of MALL in language learning will be compared with traditional supplementary materials like worksheets, workbooks and glossaries. Any positive evidence for the effectiveness of MALL as a supplement to regular coursebooks might enable the teachers to expand their students' learning into



their daily lives by preparing and sending mobile support messages along with classroom instruction.

One of the major problems for EFL students in learning a foreign language is their poor English. Studies have, so far, investigated several aspects and issues related to MALL. The first attempts to use MALL in teaching were discussed by Brown (2001:112),

In addition to these, the correlation between MALL and motivation to improve EFL proficiency (Nah, & et al, 2008:331) has been among the major studies conducted about MALL. Some of these studies have dealt with MALL as a substitute for conventional learning materials or coursebooks, and as a distance learning tool. Despite the existence of studies focusing on many aspects of MALL in language teaching, the literature still lacks sufficient research exploring the effectiveness of MALL and mobile learning tools as supplementary materials for ELT coursebooks. Where it has rarely been used by few institutions as a supplementary teaching method, remain unknown due to a lack of sufficient research on the topic.

This study, therefore, aims to contribute not only to the literature, but also to educational practices by eliciting evidence for the practical uses and the effect of MALL in EFL classes as a supplementary material in foreign language classrooms. The potential of MALL in language learning will be compared with traditional supplementary materials like worksheets, workbooks and glossaries. Any positive evidence for the effectiveness of MALL as a supplement to regular coursebooks might enable the teachers to expand their students' learning into their daily lives by preparing and sending mobile support messages along with classroom instruction(Ibid:333).

1.2 Aim of the Study

This study aims at investigating the effect of mobile assisted language learning (MALL) technology in teaching English language to college students.

1.3 Definition of Basic Terms

1.3.1 Effect

Richards & Schmidt (2002:175) define the effect; as a "measure of the strength of one variable's effect on another or the relationship between two or more variables".

The operational definition of the "effect" is the way in which the independent variable affects the dependent one as a result of treatment under controlled conditions (Richards & Rodgers,2001:19).

1.3.2 MALL Technology

Traxler (2007 :11) defines MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) as "anytime and anywhere" approach to language learning that enhances learning through the use of mobile devices such as mobile phones, PDAs (personal digital assistant), tablet PCs, Smartphones, laptop computers, and personal media players.

It may refer to "mobile technologies" which are portable and accessible anytime and anywhere. On the other side, "mobility" may also refer to the "mobility of the student", in which case the focus is not on the technology used, but on the learner who accesses the information in different places, at different times. Kukulska (2005:295) emphasize that while defining mobility, spatial mobility should not be the only concern; "temporal" and "contextual mobility" are also of great importance.

1.3.3 Teaching English Language

General, non-technical terms for the work of teachers English, whether with children, adolescents, or adults, and whether as a first, second, foreign, or additional language. However organized, whatever the aim, and whatever the methods used,



such teaching currently proceeds on a scale well beyond that of any other language past or present(Richards & Rodgers,2001:541).

Richards & Schmidt (2002:179) define teaching *English Language (ELT)* is a double-blind peer-reviewed international journal dedicated to promoting scholarly exchange among teachers and researchers in the field of Teaching English Language.

2.THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 MALL Technology

Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) is a branch of technology-enhanced learning which can be implemented in numerous forms including face-to face, distant or on-line modes (Kukulska-Hulme, 2005:296).

In this study, mobile SMS and MMS messages that are sent to support coursebook content and in-class learning in English preparatory classes are called "supplementary messages". The messages intend to function as preparation for the following topics or practice of the previous topics.

Keegan (2002:172) says that, Mobile assisted language learning is a relatively new field in language learning and settled definitions have not been yet developed for terms frequently used in this field. Even the definition of the "mobility" itself is a highly controversial issue. Scholars have been exploring ways of creating comprehensive, universal, and satisfactory definitions of some concepts in mobile learning.

Most of the disagreement about the definition of mobile learning and mobile language learning arises from the connotations of "mobility". Kukulska (2009:298) argues that this ambiguous term may have two different connotations which will inevitably affect the definition of "mobile learning". On one hand, it may refer to "mobile technologies" which are portable and accessible anytime and anywhere. On



the other side, "mobility" may also refer to the "mobility of the learner", in which case the focus is not on the technology used, but on the learner who accesses the information in different places, at different times. Kakiyama and Sørensen (2001:33) emphasize that while defining mobility, spatial mobility should not be the only concern; "temporal" and "contextual mobility" are also of great importance. In this sense, Traxler & Kukulska (2005:12) definition of mobile learning as any educational provision where the dominant technologies are handheld devices would not be that comprehensive in that it does not refer to learner mobility. Thus, the definition of mobile learning as a type of learning that takes place when the learner is not at a fixed location, or when the learner takes advantage of the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies would be healthier to adopt (O'Malley et al., 2003: 6).

Kukulska (2005:295) reports in her study that there is some computing-related terminology that is worth knowing even for someone who has no interest or ability in technology. The terms "ubiquitous", "pervasive", and "ambient" are the ones which have been frequently used to describe the characteristics of MALL. Ubiquity, in this context, refers to being available everywhere due to mobile devices' portability. Portability (small size, and lightness) of mobile devices turns them into familiar, ordinary objects in our daily lives, and this makes MALL a pervasive learning type. In time, these small, portable, light, ubiquitous mobile devices become such natural parts of our lives that they are called "ambient".

2.2 Types of MALL devices and current uses

Mobile learning is an extremely fast-moving field with numerous devices and applications which are in a process of rapid change and development. Trinder (2005:20) presents a broad list of mobile learning and mobile enhanced language learning devices ranging from simple single-purpose devices like audio-players, to multi-purpose high-technology devices such as mobile phones and personal digital assistants (PDAs). Trinder's list of mobile tools (2005:21) includes mobile phones,



PDA's, Smartphone, GPS tools, laptop computers, MP3 or MP4 players, video tapes, multimedia players, e-game tools, e-organisers, e-books, CDs and DVDs as mobile learning devices. Although attempts were made to use these devices in artificial learning settings for experimental purposes.

Nowadays, MALL can be observed that they are also used for educational purposes and many of them have already proved to be effective tools of language learning. MALL has four types as it follows:

2.2.1 Mobile Phones

According to a recent report by International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2009:3), mobile phones, among the many types of mobile learning devices, are the most widely owned and used devices, with approximately 4.6 billion subscriptions all over the world. Moreover, this number has been increasing at an enormous pace due to the developments in the mobile phone technology and the expansion of the mobile market. This popularity of mobile phones is rooted in several reasons. First of all, even the simplest mobile phones provide an SMS (Short Message Service) function for sending text messages, alarm clocks and planners to wake us up or to remind us of important dates. Similarly, most of them also have MMS (Multimedia Message Service) functions which enable the user to transmit messages which integrate coloured visuals, sounds and text (Collins, 2005:402). Additionally, mobile phones incorporate basic daily personal information management tools like address books and calendars which let people get rid of their phonebooks and agendas (Trinder, 2005:12). More sophisticated mobile phones of the modern age of technology include integrated software, cameras, Bluetooth connections, media players, mobile operating systems, wireless connection tools, and even navigation tools (GPS) which make them no different than a fully equipped computer. However, despite all these sophisticated functions and widespread use of mobile phones (Pettit & et al, 2007:18) and only a minority of users use them for learning purposes.



The popularity of mobile phones has inspired not only the stakeholders in the mobile market, but also many innovative scholars and educators in the last decades. There have been a number of studies looking into the use of mobile phones and basic functions of mobile phones in language learning. Kiernan and Kiernan & et al (2004:71) carried out one of the first studies investigating the use of mobile phones in learning.

MALL approach with task-based learning has drawn attention to a number of potential advantages of mobile phones in language learning. Later on, several studies (Lu, 2008:515) have particularly investigated vocabulary learning opportunities through mobile phones' SMS and MMS functions. In these studies, mobile phones have mostly proved to be effective vocabulary learning devices. For example, Thornton and Houser's study (2005:292) reveals that students who receive mobile vocabulary lessons learn more vocabulary than the students learning the same set of vocabulary in class. Similarly, Lu (2008:516) states that mobile phones are more effective vocabulary learning tools than traditional pen and paper based vocabulary learning. However, he also mentions the importance of participation in the learning activity. The results of the same study suggests that the students reading the vocabulary messages with a high frequency did better on the post-tests than those reading the messages with less frequency. Nah & et al (2008:331) recently conducted a similar study with mobile phones, but in that study, they used mobile phones to access the Internet for learning purposes.

2.2.2 Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs)

Beatty (2003:74) explains Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) as small hand-held computers used for downloading and storing information such as documents, databases and calendar entries. This definition of PDAs is perhaps a valid and complete one for the times Beatty carried out his research. Although it still includes basic functions of PDAs, several additional features of the modern PDAs should



be added to this definition. Modern PDAs, for example, enable users to compose music, to capture and create videos, and to program advanced computer software. Nowadays, these devices are also used as GPS navigators through direct connection to the Internet via GSM operators. Due to their advanced technological features, such as multimedia interfaces, integrated operating systems, media players, and larger screens, PDAs are among the mobile devices that have been most used for educational purposes (Clough et al. 2007:360). Nevertheless, when compared to mobile phones, they are owned and used by relatively few people (Cavus & Ibrahim, 2009:87). Studies have so far investigated different uses of PDAs in several fields of study in education. Corlett & et al. (2005:162) for instance, designed a mobile learning organiser which was implemented on a wireless-enabled handheld PDA to support MSc students' academic achievement. The organiser provided the students with all the content they covered in classes. In this study, PDA-enhanced learning was favoured by the students and many students reported that they wanted more resources to be made available in PDA format (Ibid).

However, besides its advantages like portability, lightness, attractiveness, and sophisticated operating system features, students also reported some problems like short battery life, no internet access outside the school, applications which slowed down the system, and general crashes from time to time. Another study, by Song and Fox (2008:290), focused on using PDA devices for incidental vocabulary learning. This study suggests that undergraduate level students can make use of PDAs in various and novel ways to improve their vocabulary. They sometimes use PDAs to connect to the internet for urgent needs, and sometimes use them as electronic dictionaries.

2.2.3 Podcasts and Media Players

O'Malley & et al (2003:29) provide a definition of the portmanteau word "podcasts" as a series of digital media files that are released and downloaded through an Internet connection. An important point to be considered about



podcasts is that they work on the basis of subscription technology, that is the user subscribes to the source of the materials on the internet and then this source sends the podcasts, rather than signing in and downloading material (Campbell, 2005:33).

In this respect, synchronization of podcasting devices with computers is an important issue to increase the effectiveness of these devices. The word podcast is usually explained as a combination of iPod, a famous media-player, and broadcast (Evans, 2008: 492). Podcasts were first introduced at the beginning of the 2000s and Duke University was the first institution to realize the educational potential of these magic boxes .

In 2005, Duke University distributed free 20GB Apple iPod devices to all of its freshmen students and enabled them to download course content to support their learning. Since then, there have been many studies (Bongey & et al.:350) exploring the use and the effectiveness of podcasting in supporting academic achievement and language learning. In

a recent study, Power and Shrestha (2009:25) suggested that podcasting is a new tool being used in education and language learning in particular, and podcasts can be enhanced by adding images, movies, and hyperlinks to their contents. However, in a previous study, Stanley (2006:28) used podcasts as supplementary tools for textbook materials in his study and the results suggest that podcasting can serve as an efficient supplemental resource outside the class. Additionally, several other studies (Lee & Chan, 2007:88) focused on the effects of podcasting on the students' motivation and attitudes towards learning and they elicited positive attitudes suggesting that podcasts are motivating tools for learning.

In addition to podcasting devices like iPods, iPhones or iTunes, simple media players can also be used for similar learning purposes particularly in distance education. Students can listen to these sound files in any kind of media player enabled device like MP3 or MP4 players, portable CD/DVD players, mobile phones, and palm computers.



2.3 MALL: a substitute or a supplementary device?

MALL studies have raised numerous controversial questions. Among the most important of these is whether MALL should be adopted as a substitute for regular classroom teaching practices or should be used as a supplementary learning tool to support the regular classroom teaching and learning process. At the initial stages of MALL, there were no such arguments proposed.

However, as MALL continued to improve both in its technologies and practices, studies (Cherian & Williams, 2008:98) began to focus on the use of MALL as a substitute for classroom teaching. MALL has stated that they observed no significant difference between distant mobile learning outcomes and traditional classroom learning outcomes. They further note that with appropriate pedagogy, mobile learning can be as effective as face-to-face learning, and they even prefer to call m-Learning as "the beginning of the end of classroom learning" (Cherian & Williams, 2008:1).

On the other hand, Chinnery (2006:14) argued that mobile technologies cannot function as the instructors in the classrooms. They are only instructional tools which are useful in the hands of qualified and successful instructors. In the same study, Chinnery supports his arguments by calling attention to certain disadvantages of using MALL either resulting from its own nature or from the instructors themselves. A number of disadvantages and challenges related to the use of MALL applications such as small screens, limited audiovisual quality, virtual keyboarding, and limited power supply clearly shows that MALL cannot possibly serve as a substitute for traditional classroom learning (Chinnery, 2006:13).

Similarly, Kukulska (2009:295) investigated the effects of mobile learning practices on traditional language learning. Unlike the studies suggesting the use of MALL as a potential substitute for classroom learning, it has dealt with MALL as a supplementary learning material and she has come up with some suggestions about the best pedagogy to implement in language learning (Ibid).



2.4 Advantages of MALL as a supplementary material

There are many advantages of MALL learning as they follow:

1. Learners find learning languages with MALL applications quite motivating due to their portability. Half of the participants in that study saved the SMS vocabulary lessons for rereading later.
(Kennedy & Levy, 2008: 323)
2. Learners are highly accessible and there is a very widespread ownership of certain mobile devices like mobile phones, wireless laptops, and media players.
(ITU, 2009:25)
3. MALL first of all, is free learning from place and time limitations and this is a highly motivating situation for the students. As mentioned before, students feel more motivated to learn when they are free to decide when and where they learn. More sophisticated mobile phones or Smartphones enable learners to connect to the internet to access the information they need anytime and anywhere.
(Kukulska-Hulme, 2005:298).
4. Nah, White and Sussex (2008:112) found that the WAP sites accessed through mobile phones were effective for EFL teaching cousebook development and served as useful supplementary learning means to be used regularly outside the classroom. The reasonable price of the mobile phones and mobile communication, huge broadband capacities.
5. The equipements of MALL learning are useful technology to provide students with an intensive learning environment, students can receive and send their assignments through wireless modems and cards anytime in a day.
(Wishart ,2008:84)



6. Students were also able to access the course documentation anytime and anywhere they wanted. Another benefit they reported was easily accessing the online course discussion groups in which they had the opportunity to discuss course content either with their instructors or other trainees.
7. It is clearly due to the flexibility in when and where they are posted and completed with the access to the Internet.
8. students mostly make use of Malls as comprehensive web-enabled dictionaries which help them improve their vocabulary learning and pronunciation skills.
(Abdous et al, 2009:26)
9. Despite the abundance of benefits of using MALL as a supplementary learning material, there have also been claims about the drawbacks and difficulties of using MALL in foreign language learning or learning in general.

2.5 Disadvantages and challenges of using MALL as a supplementary material

There are many disadvantages of MALL learning, which can be can for both teachers and learners.

1. First of all, mobile phones, as one of the most widespread MALL devices, have been criticized for their tiny screen sizes and keyboarding problem due to one-finger data entry function (Chinnery, 2006:115). These features make mobile devices inappropriate tools for improving certain skills like writing.
2. Mobile phones are not suitable devices to learn new content but they may serve as effective tools for reviewing and practicing.
(Kiernan & et al ,2006, 26)



3. Students in the "mobile phone e-mail user group" were not able to complete the narrative tasks in due time, whereas all other students were successful in completing the given tasks.
4. MALL cannot always be effective in improving all the skills in foreign language learning.
(Ibid)

CONCLUSION

This study has discussed the effect of MALL learning in teaching English language, it can be said that there is significantly a positive relationship between MALL technology and teaching English language to college students.

First of all mobile assisted language learning (MALL) was discussed with four types of MALL .After that, it was explained that MALL was used as a supplementary material in this study.

In addition to these, the effectiveness of MALL technology in supplementing teaching English language and into the attitudes towards such supplementation in educational settings .

Finally, it was discussed the advantages & disadvantages of MALL learning.

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جمهورية العراق
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