

Using Mobile Learning for Developing Writing Skills among Vernacular Medium Upper Primary School Students

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Abstract

Mobile based language learning is recognised as a potential and convenient way as extension to currently existing methods because it is spontaneous. Mobile computing becomes an attractive motivation for learners. This offers the learners a chance to practice writing on-the-move. Although there have been studies to improve writing skills, academic writing was never really touched. The participants were three boys, from which two of them were little bit able to read and write English but the third child was unable to read and write English. The possibilities of mobile learning in teaching academic writing skills for students are explored in this paper. The findings reveal that with the help of mobile learning students took active part and they were collaborative towards the activities and they started taking initiative in the activities. Based on the discussion, it can be concluded that the potential of mobile learning in teaching Vernacular medium students' academic writing is high.

Keywords: Mobile based language learning, Mobile computing

Introduction

Although mobile learning does have its downside compared to a computer, there are many studies on the usage of mobile learning for specific language skills like listening, speaking, reading, grammar and vocabulary (Guerrero et al., 2010; Suneetha, 2013; Lee & Kim, 2013). However, there are not many studies on how to use mobile-learning to teach writing skills. This can be seen clearly when Burston (2013) did a bibliography which consists of 345 publications on Mobile Assisted Language Learning from 1994 to 2012. Out of the 345 publications, less than 5% used MALL to enhance writing skills.

In an English medium classroom, major subjects seem important to the students and the English language classes are considered only after the core subjects. On the other hand, in the vernacular medium classroom, English is considered a challenging subject by the students and the English language teacher invites their attention. In fact, the students give more importance to the subject and prefer it to other subjects. The motivation level of the students towards learning English is very high in the vernacular medium and the involvement they show in the classroom activities do reveal their desire to master English language. Moreover, they volunteer to perform all the tasks assigned by the teacher of English and create conducive atmosphere for learning English.

In spite of all the merits of the vernacular medium, the English language teacher faces challenges that question the outcome of his teaching. It is observed that the pass percentage of vernacular medium students in English examination is generally very low and its comparison with the pass percentage of English medium reveals the unbridgeable gap.

In the institutes of higher learning, the vernacular medium students suffer from a syndrome that does not allow them to perform well in English language classes. They imagine a boundary that does not permit them to exercise their talent in the process of learning

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English language. The students think that they do not have adequate exposure to English language right from their primary education and also consider it a sign of weakness. Further, they feel inhibited to exercise their learning with others outside the classroom.

The English language teacher has to devise a special formula to make his teaching fruitful in the vernacular medium classroom. He should break the imaginary boundary set by the students and consider only the real factors that impede their learning of English. The teacher should also realize that he cannot expect from them what he can expect from the English medium students. He/

She has to realize that a simple learning from the students' part can be a significant outcome of teaching in the vernacular medium.

Present position of English language in school curriculum

Teaching formally the reading, writing, and subjects is not allowed. Opportunities to listen and speak are to be provided. Without adopting any formal approach 'essential skills of identification, comparison, matching, naming, drawing and counting' are to be imparted.

Teaching writing to vernacular medium students

Every educational system has certain objectives which aim at bringing about desirable changes in pupil. In order to bring about those changes, the institutions arrange learning experience. The success of learning can be judged only in terms of the changes brought about by this experience. This is a learning experience and evaluation.

There are so many factors that affect the teaching-learning process in India. The students in India can be categorized into two; the one is having the regional language as medium of study from the primary level and the other is having English as the medium of study. Hence, the problem of teaching English as a second language, to the Indian students starts from the pre-schooling.

What do they write? –

Learners write guided compositions which are dictated by their teachers without any attention and retention of knowledge.

How do they write?

They don't know how to construct a small sentence. They make number of spelling errors. As a result difficulties, translation method, no linguistic background, punctuation, correct spelling, grammar etc. There is an alarming need to change the situation, need to use effective innovative methods.

Mobile Learning

Mobile learning is, "any sort of learning that happens when the learner is not at a fixed predetermined location, or learning that happens when the learner takes advantage of the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies.

Mobile learning is also defined as "learning across multiple contexts, through social and content interactions, using personal electronic devices" ~ (Crompton, 2013 p. 4)

It is becoming an important feature both in the corporate and education markets. In other words, with the use of mobile devices, learners can learn anywhere and at any time.

The term M-learning or "mobile learning" has different meanings for different communities, covering a range of use scenarios including e-learning, educational technology and distance education, that focuses on learning with mobile devices.

Mobile Learning has revolutionized the teacher-student transactions in the recent past as mobile phones have become a common feature of our daily life communications. Mobile

learning is the product of wireless technologies. Mobile Learning is thriving in social constructivist learning paradigms.

Using Mobile Learning in Education

- Mobile learning focuses on the mobility of the learner, interacting with portable technologies, and learning that reflects a focus on how society and its institutions can accommodate and support an increasingly mobile population.
- There is also a new direction in Mobile Learning that gives the instructor more mobility.
- It includes creation of on the spot and in the field learning material that predominately uses smart phone.
- Using mobile tools for creating learning aids and materials becomes an important part of informal learning.
- Mobile Learning, like other forms of e-learning, is also collaborative. Sharing is almost instantaneous among everyone using the same content, which leads to the reception of instant feedback and tips.
- Mobile Learning also brings strong portability by replacing books and notes with small devices, filled with tailored learning contents. In addition, it is simple to utilize mobile learning for a more effective and entertaining experience.
- For class management, mobile devices (such as a Pocket PC) in the classroom can be used to enhance group collaboration among students through communication applications, interactive displays, and video features.
- It has the potential to do much more than deliver courses, or parts of courses. It includes the use of mobile/handheld devices to perform any of the following:-
 - ✓ Deliver education materials and promote learning
 - ✓ Faster communications and collaboration
 - ✓ Conduct assessments and evaluations
 - ✓ Provide access to performance support and knowledge
 - ✓ Capture evidence of learning activity

Cell phones or smartphones, multi-game devices, personal media players (PMPs), personal digital assistants (PDAs), and wireless single-purpose devices can help deliver coaching and mentoring, conduct assessments and evaluations (e.g., quizzes; tests; surveys and polls; and certifications), provide on-the-job support and access to information, education and references, and deliver podcasts, update alerts, forms and checklists.

Existing mobile technology can replace cumbersome resources such as textbooks, by visual aids and presentation technology. Interactive and multi-mode technology allows students to engage and manipulate information.

Besides these benefits, M-learning has helped in improving levels of literacy, numeracy, and participation in education amongst young adults and developing workforce skills and readiness among youth and young adults.

Context

The Somaiya Trust was established under the guidance of our founder Padmabhushan (Late) Shri Karamshi Jethabhai Somaiya, who firmly believed that modern education had its roots in strong values. Recognizing the need for imparting value-based education Shree S.K. Somaiya Vinay Mandir High School (Gujarati Medium) was established in the year 1965 and it's Jr. College (English Medium) in the year 1975.

The school has 24 divisions with an approximate strength of 1249 from Standard 5th to 10th.

This school is located in Vidyavihar and it's a small school. The medium of instruction in this school is Gujarati, so the first language in this school is Gujarati, second language is Hindi and English is taught as third language in this school, because of which their English is not well-versed. The students of this school come from lower socio-economic background. They stay near the school locality but some students come from Chembur and Ghatkopar. They have school bus to travel.

Vision of the school

- ✓ To empower the future generation with knowledge and ethical values.
- ✓ To build up character in the students to help them in their later life.
- ✓ To impart skills to survive in a fiercely competitive era without sacrificing ethical values.

Mission of the school

To equip the generation next to make the world a better place.

- ✓ To provide value based education and opportunities to students to help them face challenges in their life.
- ✓ To build up the overall personality of the students through Curricular and Co-curricular activities.

About the Students

Participants were three boys, from which two of them were little bit able to read and write English but the third child was unable to read and write English and two girls. So I had made efforts to make them read and write English with the help of mobile. They were able to make the sentences with the help of pictures in the mobile. They were enjoying this activity because first time they were given chance to express their ideas.

Aims and objectives of the project

- ✓ To enable the students to design the Mobile Learning strategy for enhancing writing skills among the vernacular medium students from Vinay Mandir.
- ✓ To study the perception of vernacular medium students of upper primary about the usefulness of Mobile Learning to enhance writing skill.

Definition of the Terms

Mobile learning

Mobile learning is defined as "learning across multiple contexts, through social and content interactions, using personal electronic devices".

Vernacular medium

Vernacular medium is a medium where common language is spoken by average citizens of a particular place, or a language used within a particular field.

Upper primary level

Upper primary level means standards that follow between 5th class to 8th class.

Writing skills are the expressional skills in the context of present study. It refers to the writing of photo essay.

Need of the Study

For developing writing skills

One of the main needs of the mobile learning paper was to develop writing skill among the vernacular medium students of Vinay Mandir School. Recognizing the object and writing its name in English which may enhance their vocabulary.

For developing interest

Another need of this study was to develop interest among the students of vernacular medium for mobile learning. Use of mobile and laptops helped in creating interest in them for learning.

For innovative strategies

Use of mobile learning was something new for students which grabbed their attention towards the writing essay. Nowadays there is a need for innovative technique for teaching and learning. So the mobile learning is best for innovative study.

Significance of the Study

For the Students

Students can use mobiles not only for framing essay but also for composition and report writing.

For the Teachers

- ✓ Teachers can have different mobile tools to communicate with students for better knowledge about concept
- ✓ Teachers can modify their teaching strategy according to the requirements of the student's needs.

For the Schools

- ✓ Schools should use these methods for improving their educational status.
- ✓ The use of this technology will be very cost effective for school administrations.
- ✓ Teachers and staffs can have a track of their data with the help of a cloud technology.

For the Curriculum Developers

- ✓ Curriculum developers can create master curricula for different standards of the schools.

Action plan of the research

For this the researcher has chosen the ADDIE model of Instructional Design.

Description of ADDIE Model for present study:-

Analysis

Students Analysis

There were five students involved in the research. There were three boys and two girls. All of them belong to the Gujarati medium school which is Shri. S. K. Somaiya Vinay Mandir School and from standard VII.

Need Analysis

After interacting with students the researcher understood that they were weak in their English communication skills and also the vocabulary was weak. As per curricular requirement they have to write descriptive essays. They were finding it difficult to write descriptive essays in English language which were evident by having a talk with them and also by having a discussion with their teachers. So there was a need to improve their written communication skills in writing descriptive essays among vernacular medium students.

Design

There was need to minimize the gap as they were lacking in English communication. The students were also lacking in written communication. They were having a routine way of writing essay and also had a lack of exposure of innovative methods. They had a low vocabulary and they were also lacking in correct sentence construction. The students also lacked in the skill in writing descriptive essays.

After having discussion with the students and also with their teachers the gaps in speaking and writing skills in English was identified. The researcher had designed one week strategy for developing written communication skills among vernacular medium students. To overcome this gap in communication researcher have chosen to teach descriptive essays. I had chosen "My Mother" as the descriptive essay topic to teach vernacular medium students.

Develop

After designing phase the researcher developed the following tools:

- ✓ Lesson Plan : The researcher developed the detailed lesson plan based on the following components:
 - Objective
 - Materials
 - Set Up
 - Directions
 - Extentions
 - Hints And Tips

Time-Table: The researcher developed one week time table as follows;

Day	Activity	Details
1	Warm up session	Met students, took their profile regarding their personal background, academics. Explained them the purpose of visit.
2	Visit to the site	Clicking of photos by the students with the guidance of the researcher.
3	Preparing of the schema of the essay	Selection of photos Organizing the photos in order Construction of essay sentences by having discussion with students.
4	Preparing the rough draft of the essay	Discussion with the students. Organize essay along with photographs.
5	Preparation of PPT	Preparing power point presentation on basis of photos and relevant sentences by having discussion with students
6	Presentation of essay	Each student was asked to make the presentation based on the topic with help of power point presentation.

✓ **Strategy**

Mobile learning strategy was used by the researcher to develop the descriptive writing skills among the vernacular medium students. Mobile learning offers a modern way to support learning process through mobile devices. It presents unique attributes compared to conventional e-learning: personal, portable, collaborative, interactive, contextual and situated, it emphasizes "just-in-time-learning" as instruction can be delivered anywhere and at any time through it. Moreover, it is an aid to formal and informal learning and thus holds enormous potential to transform the delivery of education and training.

So the researcher has chosen Mobile learning to teach the students and to overcome their gap in speaking and writing communication in English language.

Implementation

Accordingly the module was implemented.

Evaluation

The researcher evaluated the research on the basis of the following dimensions:-

- ✓ Help in the present scenario
- ✓ Overcoming the challenges faced by the researcher.

Observation

Introduction

The present discussion deals with the details of the collected data through,

- ✓ Observation of the students.
- ✓ Interview with the students.
- ✓ Daily reflections of the researcher.

Data Analysis

This phase involves the analysis of the following:

Help of Mobile learning in the present scenario and at the end

Sr No	Title	Present scenario	Scenario at the end of Research
1	Linguistic Background	The students were belong to the vernacular medium (Gujarati medium school), they cannot understand English language other than Gujarati and Hindi, and because of this their English vocabulary became so poor and weak. They don't know how to frame a proper sentence, their grammatical knowledge while writing an essay was poor. Apart from this, even though they knew some words in English but they were not able to write correct spelling of those words.	I made students to essay in their own words in English language and I sit beside them and helped them to frame sentences correctly correct spellings, grammar. With the help of this their got cleared between two similar pronounced words like, two & too.
2	Expressional Competencies	Students were not only weak in language but they were very shy in communicating with the researcher. They were feeling very uncomfortable initially. They were not able to express themselves like what they want from me and for that I had to ask them that what they want and how they want to do the task.	As in previous point we have seen that, initially the students were not able to communicate with me as they were very shy. And when they heard about the topic i.e. Mobile learning, they were very interested and curious to know about the mobile learning and for that they started communicating with me.

Conclusion

Hence, to conclude I want to say that the mobile learning brought students and teacher together, and teacher and student visited the site together, started to sit together, discussing together, prepare presentations together and accordingly all these things helped to overcome the problem faced by them initially.

The challenges faced by the researcher

A. Challenges faced by the researcher:

Lack of communicative competencies among students

As a researcher I found the lack of communicative competencies among students. The students were not able to speak a single line properly in English. They don't even understand English so I had talk to them in Hindi language, because the school was Gujarati medium school. And the students were there used to talk with each other in Gujarati language only.

Lack of time

I faced the challenge of lack of time because the students were not available at the same time when I was free from my college as my college time and their school time was clashing with each other. I had to ask for the prior permission of the concerned teacher so that the students can wait and we can conduct our research work.

Lack of bondage

Initially when I started the research students were not able to mix and communicate with me. I found it very difficult to talk to them because they were not ready to speak or share their feelings regarding the topic with me. And they were not ready to communicate with me so it was difficult for me create bondage between us.

Lack of resources

There was one more problem while doing this research was the lack of resource i.e. I was having the mobile phones but the students were not having the phones and due to this me and my students had to use a single phone only.

On the day of our presentation my laptop battery was low and I was doubtful on it, that whether it will work till the presentation is going on and I can't even charge my laptop because there was not any switch board in the classroom to plug in the charger of laptop.

Overcoming the challenges

When I found that the students are not able to communicate in English and they were feeling shy and hesitate to share their feelings with me at that time I build a good rapport with the students and I started to talk to them in Hindi language and slowly and gradually they feel free to share their feeling with me.

To overcome the problem of time I took the prior permission of the school teacher and my research guider as well to allow me to meet the students within their school timings.

Due to mobile learning I was able to build bondage between me and students and the students were excitingly participated into the program of doing the task on the ease.

Although the battery of my laptop was low but my presentation got complete before the laptop battery becomes off. And I shared my mobile phone with student's to click their photos.

Conclusion

Hence, all this could be attain because of mobile learning. Mobile learning brought teachers together, to sit, to discuss, to share their ideas and experiences of all the activities.

With the help of mobile learning students took active part and they were collaborative towards the activities and they started taking initiative in the activities.

Overall Observation

I was performing and observing this research for one week and although I faced some problems and challenges during the research but I was prepared to overcome from this problem and this was possible due to technology learning i.e. mobile learning. I was able to impart my knowledge and experiences to the students. My skills and abilities helped me a lot for providing knowledge about the concepts.

Conclusion

Major conclusions

A. Educational use of Mobile Learning

Mobile learning is playing a very vital role in the field of education. Its contribution is very enormous. Some of their educational uses are as follows:

- ✓ **Convenience and flexibility:** mobile learning can be accessed anywhere, at any time: at the exact moment learning is required.
- ✓ **Relevance:** mobile learning enables training to be 'situated rather than simulated' and so it makes learning possible at the point of need.
- ✓ **Learner control:** the always-available nature of mobile learning empowers learners to take the initiative and direct their own learning activities.
- ✓ **Good use of 'dead time':** mobile learning can happen during 'dead time', while travelling or waiting for a meeting to start.
- ✓ **Fits many different learning styles:** reading (text and graphics), video, animation, working through decision trees, listening to podcasts, contributing to discussions (forums or SMS), researching on the internet, choosing the correct answer (text or photograph), rating skills on a diagnostic are all means for offering learning on mobile devices.
- ✓ **Improves social learning (i.e. communicating with peers and experts):** SMS texting reminders, knowledge sharing forums, 'ask a question' forms and the use of telephony are all means to enable interaction between peers and tutors using mobile devices.
- ✓ **Encourages reflection:** the voice recorder on many mobile devices enables effortless and instantaneous recording of thoughts and opinions.
- ✓ **Easy evidence collection:** the portability of mobile devices makes them readily available for collecting portfolio evidence via audio, still or video camera.
- ✓ **Supported decision making:** mobile devices offer timely access to information, which enables the quick double-checking of a decision, and so better professional judgements.
- ✓ **Speedier remediation:** mobile learning enables forgotten or mistakenly remembered information to be speedily accessed and redressed.
- ✓ **Improved learner confidence:** Short nuggets of learning offered on mobile devices, accessed prior to meetings or beginning tasks, improve learners' confidence in their skills.
- ✓ **Easily digestible learning:** the small screen minimises the amount of information that can be offered to a learner at any given time, and so avoids cognitive overload.
- ✓ **Heightened engagement:** quick-fire knowledge or mobile assessments/quizzes, in between other kinds of training activities, keeps learning fresh and at the forefront of learners' minds, making success more likely.

✓ **Better planning for face-to-face sessions:** quick pre-assessments via mobile devices, prior to face-to-face sessions, enable trainers to determine learners' level of knowledge and plan their sessions accordingly.

✓ **Great for induction:** induction on mobile devices enables learning to be contextualised to the exact spot in a workplace it makes reference to.

The mobile technology helped the students in writing essay. It helped them to facilitate their expression, organise their thoughts.

B. Pedagogical use of Mobile

As a teacher I would use this technique in many lessons to make teaching learning process more interactive and reliable. I may incorporate this technique for teaching grammar lessons.

The use of Mobile Learning will bridge the gap between teachers and their students also the fear of learning English. Any information can be imparted just by giving some idea about the concept. Students will use their own creativity and knowledge to frame a concept.

Students will become more knowledgeable about the subject and his interest level would also be very high.

Mobile learning helps a teacher in his teaching in following ways:

- ✓ *Continuous learning*
- ✓ *Educational leapfrogging*
- ✓ *A new crop of older, lifelong learners (and educators)*
- ✓ *Breaking gender boundaries, reducing physical burdens*
- ✓ *A new literacy emerges: software literacy*
- ✓ *Education's long tail*
- ✓ *Teachers and pupils trade roles*
- ✓ *Synergies with mobile banking and mobile health initiatives*
- ✓ *New opportunities for traditional educational institutions*

Recommendations

For students

1. Use this technique for longer retention of knowledge
2. Can be used to make an complicated concept in a simpler manner
3. Give more concrete idea about the topic
4. More accurate technique for having effective essay competition in a class
5. Proper knowledge about the topic from its all views i.e.; pros & cons

For school

1. Schools must incorporate this technique to improve their teaching status.
2. Could be used for having essay competition in a school level
3. Improved & innovative technique to improve the knowledge & skills of teachers as well as students.
4. Mobile learning can be used for developing vocabulary skills of a teacher.

For teacher

1. For improving the vocabulary and grammatical skills of students.
2. For fostering curiosity among students about essay writing.
3. Improving analytical and writing skills of students.

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