Using Mobile Phones For English Teaching And Learning Purposes In Dong Nai Technology University

PhanThanh Tuan*, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Dong Nai Technology University*
Nguyen Thi Ha Phuong*, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Dong Nai University*

Abstract
Information technology has rapidly developed and become an essential part of the world. In education, especially in the field of English language teaching and learning, technology plays very important roles in classroom facilities, online resources, materials, etc. Recently, there are even more applications for learning English by mobile phones which can make teaching and learning more interesting and flexible. This paper aims to present the uses of mobile phones for English teaching and learning purposes. In addition, how mobile-phone based activities are integrated into the lessons will be discussed in the paper. The context of the study is in pre-intermediate General English classes in Dong Nai Technology University (DNTU). With mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL), the students who enjoy using mobile phones can be motivated and interested in the lessons. As a result, their English achievement can be improved.
Key words: technology, mobile-based activities, mobile-assisted language learning.

I. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Nowadays, technology has been rapidly developing and playing a vital role in revolutionizing our world in many aspects. Education is one of the fields that receives the benefits from the support of technology innovations. The availability of internet connection and softwares has offered a huge resource for education and training, especially in the area of English teaching and learning. Computers, TVs, LCDs, DVDs, Electronic Dictionary, projectors, Mobile devices, etc. have become powerful tools in English classrooms. It is true that these technologies have proved successful in supporting the traditional teaching. According to Graddol (1997), technology lies at the heart of the globalization process; affecting education work and culture.

In the context of technology booming, mobile devices such as laptops, iPads, mobile phones, etc. are integrating into education in which English teaching is one of the pioneers. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) which inherits many advantages from Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), does not only support classroom activities, but it also offers many resources for students' self studying in a more flexible and enjoyable way.

In Dong Nai Technology University (DNTU) where all students have mobile devices and internet connection is always available, using technology is encouraged to assist the English teaching and learning purposes in and outside the classrooms. Therefore, in general English courses, MALL is integrated to make the course more interesting and effective. With the main focus of examining how mobile devices support English teaching and learning activities, the project is conducted with the title "Using mobile phones for English teaching and learning purposes in Dong Nai Technology University".

1.2. Aim of the study

This paper aims to provide some activities as resources for English teaching and learning purposes in Dong Nai Technology University. After that, suggested activities to teach English with mobile phones will be presented in the paper.

1.3. Significance of the study

This paper can offer a resource for mobile phones' activities that can be used in English classrooms. The study will contribute to the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Dong Nai Technology University on their way to improve their teaching, as well as the syllabus designing with consideration of utilizing mobile phones to support English teaching and learning purposes. It can also help motivate students to learn English while they can enjoy using their smart phones.

1.4. Scope of the study

The use of MALL relate to mobile devices such as mobile phones, tablets, iPad, etc. The author of the study puts the main focus on mobile-phone based activities for students at pre-intermediate level in general English classes at DNTU due to the fact that mobile phones are the most popular devices used by the students.

II. MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

2.1. Definition of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

There are many definitions for the term MALL. According to Valarmathi (2011), MALL is actually a subset of both Mobile learning (m-learning) and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). O'Malley et al. (2003) defined it as ''any sort of learning that happens when the learner is not in a fixed, predetermined location, or learning that happens when the learner takes advantage of the learning opportunities offered by mobile technologies''. Baleghizadeh&Oladrostam (2010) considered MALL as a branch of technology-enhanced learning which can be implemented in numerous forms including face-to face, distant or on-line modes. Miangah and Nezarat (2012) stated that MALL deals with the use of mobile technology in language learning while MALL differs from CALL in its use of personal, portable devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access and interaction across different contexts of use (Kukulska-Hulme& Shield, 2008, Gholami&Azarmi, 2012, Zaki, A.A. &Yunus, M.D., 2015).

2.2. Features of MALL

Mobile devices have several features that are advantages for teaching and learning English. Some of them can be listed below:

- **Mobility:** The size and weight of mobile technology differs from one another yet it can be moved and carried easily (Zaki& Yunus,2015). Therefore, mobile phones are portable and they can be used in flexible time and location. Besides, the organization of the class can be in traditional classroom settings or in distance learning context.
- **Connectivity:** the internet connection is available and affordable for students. It allows mobile phones to be connected with each other by a shared network. Students can even connected to the internet outside the classroom. Miangah&Nezarat (2012) also state two main characteristics of mobile devices are portability and connectivity. As for connectivity, designing the mobile system must have capability of being connected and communicated with the learning website using the wireless network of the device to access learning material ubiquitously including short message service (SMS) and mobile e-mail.
- **Accessibility**: All the students nowadays go to school with their smart phones as these devices are more affordable. Most universities and colleges in Vietnam also equip strong wireless internet system so that students can get access to the internet easily. In addition, most students are now using 3G, 4G for internet connection.
- **Interactivity**: Mobile phones can offer high interactivity. In fact, the games or applications by mobile phones are designed with interaction of the user(s). Moreover, the social networks such as Facebook group or cloud computing such as Google Drive, Dropbox, media file, etc. can encourage students to have more interactions with each other.
- **Context sensitivity**: as being programmed, the data on the mobile devices can be gathered and responded uniquely to the current location and time (Klopfer, E., Squire, K., and Jenkins, H., 2002; Miangah&Nezarat, 2012). This can help teachers to adjust the content to the suitable level of students.
- **Individuality**: The students can get access to the data or share their ideas without fear of loosing face of their own levels. Moreover, according to Miangah&Nezarat (2012) activities platform can be customized for individual learner.
- **Eye-catching:** the contents designed for mobile phones are always eye-catching with colorful picture, beautiful layout, and interesting animation.

2.3. Recent Applications of MALL

A lot of research have been conducted with the aims to investigate the effectiveness of MALL and how it can be applied in the existing classroom. Teaching vocabulary by using mobile phones is one of the most popular choices. Thornton and Hiuser (2005) conducted an experimental study by sending short mini-lessons for learning vocabulary through email to mobile phones of the students three times a day. They used new words in multiple contexts for the learners to infer the meaning. The results showed that student scores for posttest have been improved. The similar result has been found by Lu (2008). In the experimental research conducted among 30 high school students, the students were divided into two group. One group learned English vocabulary via mobile phone, while the other used print materials. The result indicated that mobile users show greater gain in vocabulary than paper-based learners.

In addition to vocabulary teaching, MALL can also help improve the grammatical ability of the students. Baleghizadeh&Oladrostam (2010) conducted the studied to show the efficacy of using mobile phones for boosting the grammatical accuracy of a group of Iranian EFL students. Students are asked to record their sentences and send to their friends by mobile phones. The students need to detect the grammatical mistakes from their peers. The results obtained showed the effectiveness of using mobile phones in increasing grammatical ability of students.

Beside teaching grammar, MALL can be used to teach reading class for collaborative reading. As cited in Yang (2013), Lan, Sung, and Chang (2007) conducted a comparative study to investigate the benefit of using Tablet PCs in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context to improve peer collaboration in reading class, compared to the traditional class setting. The results indicated the application of Tablet PC to facilitate the collaboration between peers outweighed the potential weakness hindering students' collaboration process in a traditional setting. Moreover, the utilization of the mobile-device-supported peer-assisted learning could reduce EFL learners' anxiety and promote their motivation and confidence.

Other studies by Thornton & Houser (2005) Huang and Sun (2010), and KazemNajmi (2015) also proved that MALL can be effective approach to teach English idioms, listening, and writing.

III. USING MOBILE PHONES FOR ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING PURPOSES IN DNTU

3.1. Using mobile-phone based activities to teach English

Using mobile phones to teach English has become more and more popular. There are a wide range of activities that can be integrated into the teaching and learning of English as presented below:

• The mobile-phone based games can be used to teach second language skills such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, listening and reading comprehension and spelling. Online quizzes related to the lessons can be created by teachers on *kahoot.it*. In the classroom, all the students can get access into the page and play the quiz. The quiz can be warm-up or review activities with amazing sound and color display that can attract students.

• There are other strategies for learning vocabulary via mobile phones. Learners can be provided with some tailored vocabulary practices based on activities performed in the classroom. They are, then, asked to complete the tasks on their mobile phones and send them back to their instructors. Learning vocabulary can also be accompanied by the pictorial annotation shown on learners' mobile devices for better understanding of new words.

• Another activities can be used to teach listening, speaking, and pronunciation. The students can get access to the Website to listen to podcasts of English language news broadcasts in order to carry out assignments. For speaking or pronunciation activities, they can record their voice/ capture a video and send the files to their partner for feedback.

• Teaching writing using social networks: The popular of Facebook and other social networks can enable the use of group work and peer feedbacks. The teacher gives the requirements and students post their answers or comments on the forum. With the use of forum, students can see the whole class contributions and it's easy to manage the forum than just use emails. Moreover, students can create a group by themselves to work on a writing assignment.

• Learning Grammar: Grammatical points can be learnt through a specifically designed program installed on mobile devices, in which grammatical rules are taught, followed by multiple-choice activities where learners select the correct answer from the given alternatives. Grammatical exercises can be in the form of 'true-false' or 'fill-in the blanks' which are to be responded by the learners. Grammatical explanations may also be presented to learners via vocal service or short message service (Miangah&Nezarat, 2012).

• Using online resources for reference: students can use dictionary or websites which can support their learning. They can use these resources for their own self-studying.

3.2. Suggestions for using mobile phones for English teaching and learning purposes in DNTU

Using mobile phones to teach English is the new trend nowadays due to its many benefits. In order to have the utmost effectiveness, when applying MALL, teachers should pay attention to the following recommendations.

First of all, like any other teaching methods, the use of MALL should also has the properties that support effective learning such as learner centered: It is developed from students' own knowledge and skill; enabling them to think based on their previous knowledge; knowledge centered: The learning process comes from validated knowledge that was taught inventively by using different methods; assessment centered: The learners are assessed accordingly based on their ability and the assessment is able to offer diagnosis and further guidance; community centered: An effective learner will form a community to share knowledge and support

those who are less able in their studies. (National Research Council, 1999, as cited in Sharples et al., 2005; Zaki&Yunus, 2015).

Second, the mobile-based activities are varied and need to have clear instructions. It is suggested that teachers should carefully select the activities used. These activities should be related to the content and reflect the goals and objectives of the lesson. In order to implement the activities, teachers should give clear instructions with modeling so that all the students can follow at the same time.

Third, despite many advantages, MALL still have some disadvantages such as the weak internet connection or the distraction of the students. These problem can be avoided as the teachers are well-prepared for the class as well as manage the class with careful attention.

Finally, the technology is increasingly developing with useful applications. However, mobile phones cannot replace the traditional material, teacher, and classroom. The main focus of the teaching and learning is the students and the contents. MALL is the supporting methods used by the teachers to make studying more inspiring and interesting. By applying mobile phones into teaching and learning appropriately, the students can enjoy more benefits from the use of the advanced technology.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mobile phones can be employed as useful tools in English teaching and learning. As a matter of fact, the majority of students enjoy using mobile phones as it's interesting and relaxing. Taking the advantages of MALL, teachers can encourage students to involve in the lessons using mobile-phone based activities. Moreover, they can utilize their mobile phones to learn English by themselves more effectively. The papers presented a number of effective ways to apply MALL as well as how to apply these activities into the lessons. Although MALL cannot replace the traditional classroom context, the right use of the mobile phones can help the teaching and learning of English can be more interesting, effective, and interactive.

It can be suggested that the teachers should not ban the mobile phones in the classrooms. Instead, they can integrate mobile-phone based activities into the lessons such as warm-up games, quizzes, online dictionary, YouTube videos, forums, etc. to let students enjoy the lessons and their mobile phones at the same time. In conclusion, thanks to interesting and useful educational applications in English teaching and learning, the students should be encouraged and instructed to take advantages of the new technology to support their studying in more effective but enjoyable ways.

REFERENCES

[1].   Baleghizadeh, S. &Oladrostam, E. (2011). The Effect of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on Grammatical Accuracy of EFL Students.Mextesol, 34 (2).Retrived 30 July 2016 from http://mextesol.net/journal/index.php?page=journal&id_article=50

[2].   Gholami, J., &Azarmi, G. (2012). An introduction to mobile assisted language learning.International Journal of Managment, IT and Engineering, 2(8), 1-9.

[3].   Graddol, D. (1997). The future of English. London: The British Council.

[4].   Huang, C. and P. Sun. (2010). Using mobile technologies to support mobile multimedia English listening exercises in daily life.The International Conference on Computer and Network Technologies in Education (CNTE 2010).

[5].   Klopfer, E., Squire, K., and Jenkins, H. (2002). "Environmental Detectives: PDAs as a window into a virtual simulated world." In: Proceedings of IEEE International Workshop on Wireless and Mobile Technologies in Education. Vaxjo, Sweden: IEEE Computer Society, pp. 95-98

[6].   Kukulska-Hulme, A., Shield, L. (2008). An overview of mobile assisted language learning: From content delivery to supported collaboration and interaction. ReCALL, 20(3), 271-289.

[7].   Lan, Y.-J., Sung, Y.-T., & Chang, K.-E. (2007). A mobile-device-supported peer-assisted learning system for collaborative early EFL reading.Language Learning & Technology, 11(3), 130-151.

[8].   Lu, M. (2008). Effectiveness of vocabulary learning via mobile phone.Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 24(6), 515-525. Retrieved 01 August 2016 from https://resources.oncourse.iu.edu/access/content/user/mikuleck/Filemanager_Public_Files/L567/Mobile%20Devices/Lu%202008%20vocabulary%20and%20mobile%20phones.pdf

[9].   Miangah, T.M. &Nezarat, A. (2012). Mobile-Assisted Language Learning.International Journal of Distributed and Parallel Systems, 3 (1).

[10]. Najmi, K. (2015). The Effect of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) on Guided Writing Skill of Iranian Upper-Intermediate EFL Learners.Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 2 (4): 42-52.

[11]. National Research Council. (1999). How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

[12]. O'Malley, C., Vavoula, G., Glew, J.P., Taylor, J., Sharples, M., &Lefrere, P. (2003). MOBIlearn WP4 – Guidelines for Learning/Teaching/Tutoring in a Mobile Environment.
[13]. Sharples, M., Taylor, J., &Vavoula, G. (2005). Towards a theory of mobile learning.Proceedings of mLearn, 1(1), 1-9.
[14]. Thornton, P. & Houser, C. (2005). 'Using mobile phones in English education in Japan'.Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 21(3): 217-228.
[15]. Valarmathi, K. E. (2011). Mobile assisted language learning. Journal of Technology for ELT, 2(2), 1-8.
[16]. Yang, J. (2013). Mobile Assisted Language Learning: Review of the Recent Applications of Emerging Mobile Technologies. English Language Teaching, 6(7).
[17]. Zaki1, A.A. &Yunus, M.D. (2015). Potential of Mobile Learning in Teaching of ESL Academic Writing.English Language Teaching, 8(6).