

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 11 : 12 December 2011

ISSN 1930-2940

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Utility of Mobile Phones in English Classes

K. Devadoss, Ph.D.



Introduction

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Utility of Mobile Phones in English Classes

The hand-held mobile-phone is in common use today. This instrument can help multiple-tasking in the language classes. The tool can help develop effective Listening, Reading and Speaking skills in a language class room.

Despite stringent rules against the use of cell phones in the classroom and on campus, students somehow bring the instrument into the classroom. So it may be better to exploit the students' interest (in bringing the mobile phones to class) as the main tool for language teaching and learning.

Generally, students would like to comprehend a subject in their own convenient pace of time. In fact, some would want the learning to be pursued at a minimal cost, besides being directly applicable to their own environmental needs. It is actually here the utility of mobile technology is badly felt. (Anaraki, F, 2009)

Mobile Phone Aids Improvised Listening

Even in noisy environments, mobile phones can now be used, when extended with a new Personal Sound System similar to that of *SoundFlavors*. Such additions enhance the hearing capacity. In fact, these devices are compatible with all popular Bluetooth enabled mobile phones to give the client freedom and mobility of hands-free communication with superior acoustic performance even in noisy places like restaurants, railway stations, departmental stores, etc. Hence, a mobile phone embedded with this facility may best turn out to be a tool for language learning for playing already recorded lessons even outside the classroom so that the learner may make use of their cell phones as a tool to listen to the recorded lessons even during their travel time.

Enhance Reading through Recording

Reading achieves its perfection only through practice. Practice, in this context, is repetitive trials. The recording option in cell phones may play an important role in Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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enhancing one's reading skills. We all want to listen to our own voice and see for ourselves how we sound! Students will be interested in hearing how they speak English. The reading and recording exercise in the classroom may certainly kindle the interest in the students to record their own voice and listen to check how they perform.

SMS Option to Improve Writing

Several educators have pointed out the detrimental effects of 'create text messages' option in a mobile phone and how this affects negatively the teenagers' vocabulary. A chief examiner in the Department of Education and Science believes that text messaging poses a significant threat to writing standard in Irish language due to the use of phonetic spelling and lack of punctuation (Flynn, 2007a).

However, we can also use text messaging for vocabulary building using the following method. Each day three English words or phrases may be sent by SMS to students' phones. And they may be asked to draft text messages on their own, using the vocabulary list sent to their mobile number. These text messages exhibiting the vocabulary assigned for that day, may be scheduled to arrive during English classes. Text messages may be selected by teachers from a range of topics found in their syllabi. Besides, students may be required to incorporate the vocabulary or phrases into English conversations during class discussions. Students may also be obligated to use the phrase during the course of their weekly text-based web chat.

This strategy of text-based mobile chat as a part of learning activity may indeed bring in desirable improvement in students' language performance.

Conference Option Facilitates Eloquence

Conference-call option in mobile phones is, of course, a helpful provision that would improve one's spoken skill. This conference-call option may be demonstrated in Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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the classroom with teachers monitoring activity. Frequent consecutive practices on Group Discussion may be given, even for practice after class hours. As this method may have great appeal to students, most of the students would become more interested in improving their communication skills. Students may be given an option to form their own team of three or four students for this purpose. Conference-call enables less-inhibited Group Discussion practice.

Installation of Word Games

We may recommend the installation of standard word games to the students' mobile phones may act as a trump card to the interested language learning lot of a classroom. Here, the language teacher may play a pivotal role in the selection and prescription of certain language games that would enhance one's language proficiency.

Conclusion

Mobile phones are now widespread in India and are particularly popular among university students. Although the mobile phones can be a distraction in the classroom, functions such as Internet access and e-mail capability have transformed them into sophisticated communication tools. They are also potentially useful in language learning. Mobile phones as tools for classroom learning can be a boon for both the learner and the teacher.

The Common features of mobile phones comprising Internet access, voice-messaging, SMS text-messaging, cameras, and even video-recording would set an excellent language learning ambiance as these features could enable communicative language practices, access to authentic content, and task completion (Chinnery G, 2006).

To conclude, mobile phones certainly draw our "attention to a number of potential advantages of it as well as highlighting some limitations, but overall mobile phones Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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represent a language learning resource worthy of further investigation.” (Patrick J. Kiernan, 2004)

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patrick@cck.dendai.ac.jp Cell phones in task based learning - Are cell phones useful language learning tools?

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