

Use Of Mobile Phones By Visually Impaired (Vi) Learners To Learn The English Language

Yalala Prakash Kumar, Ph.D Scholar,

Centre for English language studies,

University of Hyderabad

prakashkumarcels@gmail.com

Abstract

Technological advancement has led to the availability of mobile phones. In the English language teaching (ELT) classrooms, learners are getting exposed to various methods of learning the language. Mobile phones are used to learn various aspects of the language. This is contributing to effective teaching and learning of English. In Nuhi Ballaca (2016)'s view, use of smart phones and other mobile learning technologies provides benefit to learners and they give a language learning opportunity everywhere because of connectivity and portal. Suleiman N, (2008) says that the problems of the learners can be lessened by giving the flexibility to choose their location of study through mobile use. The problems of the learners can be lessened by giving the flexibility to choose their location of study through mobile use. This study aimed to find out the use of mobile phones by VI learners to learn the English language. This study is important as it will contribute in the field of inclusive English language teaching and learning using technology. The data were collected from the VI learners studying at the College for Integrated Studies, University of Hyderabad. The data were analyzed qualitatively.

Key words: Visually Impaired, learners, English language, mobile phones, technology

Introduction:

Rapid growth in communication and technology has resulted in change in teaching and learning of the English language. In this digital era, use of mobile phones for teaching and learning has been increased in educational and other domains. Khansa AL-Qudaimi (2013) says that the use of mobiles for learning and educational purposes has been expanding and teachers and educators should take mobile learning to create new tools that fulfill the needs of the language learners. Traditional methods of teaching have become outdated because of passive participation of the learners and learning methods are changing due to development of technologies, the focus of teaching and learning has centered more on the learner rather than the teacher. Mobile phones provide more realistic and contextual learning for the learners beyond the classroom. Now, in the current era of technology the learners' responsibility for his /her own learning has increased and teachers' role has confined to a facilitator for learning. The necessity of a particular geographical setting and fixed time frame teaching and learning has no more a norm. So, the availability and accessibility of mobile phones have changed learning process. Every student can access the information at their disposal at any minute. There were some studies where the use of mobile phones by sighted learners to learn English language, but very few studies have been conducted to know the use of mobile phones by VI learners to learn English. However, the role of technology and mobile phones has brought a relief in the lives of VI learners as they use the internet and other application to resolve their learning day to day issues.

Review of literature

Minakshi Lahiri and James L Mosley (2012) says that appropriate use of mobile phones in the in the learning process can bring benefits to both learners and educators. They also mention that by addressing the changing trends, the educators must be prepared to learn new ways of teaching by adapting mobile phones in learning environment. By using mobile phones in the learning process the educators will become facilitators of learning rather than transmitters of information and learners will be more engaged and immersed in the learning situations and collectively will create new knowledge.

Mahmoud Amer (2014) says that learning with mobile has given positive results in the learners' skills in using English language as they daily refer to mobile to learn language.

Lutfun Nahar and Azizah Jaafar (2015) gives the facts that mobile an application developed to learn the Braille through mobile phone for visually impaired learners. It has provided the good platform to the learners in writing Braille. It also has provided learning Braille without using computers.

Nuhi Bllaea (2016) study suggest that using smart phones and other mobile learning technologies provides language learning opportunities everywhere and one can benefit in his/her learning by efficient usage of mobile phones.

Miriam sester and cristorao (2017) study has found out that when learners are exposed to mobile applications and programs, they quickly learned and helped each other to solve their issues in the subject. Visually impaired learners are using mobile phones to learn English language through mobile phones and the learners are learning multiple sources by constantly exposing themselves to the infinite information. Their study revealed that VI learners have become self-dependents in their learning through mobiles.

Objectives of the study

- 1) To find out the role of mobile phones in learning English by VI learners
- 2) To find out effectiveness of mobile phones to VI learners to learn English language
- 3) To find out the challenges of VI learners in using mobile phones in English learning

Methodology

Since, the study is explorative in nature a questionnaire was used to collect the data from the VI learners of the college for integrated studies at the University of Hyderabad. The questionnaire consists of two sections where, section "A" consist of Meta details learners and section "B" consist of questions related to the use of mobile phones in learning English by VI learners. The data were collected individually by asking the use of mobile phones in learning the English language. The rational for selecting VI learners at university of Hyderabad was that they all have the exposurer to technology rather than other VI learners of various institutes.

Findings and discussion

Role of mobile phones in learning English by VI learners

The learners have said that the role of mobile phones in their learning of English was a blessing. That, they can access the information and study material whenever they wanted to study. Whenever, the teacher asks the learners for an assignment or homework in the course of study to complete and submit then VI learners use their mobile phones visit multiple sites to gather the information for the task. The learners responded that they can use their mobiles at any time to learn English. The immense significance of the technology and mobile phones provides them with the freedom of learning at their ease. They can study a single topic from multiple teachers by using mobile phones. For example, if the learners want to study about the parts of speech, grammar, or any other aspect of the English then they can go for lectures from different sites that are at their disposal. Learning English through mobile phones is comfortable and easy because they can rehearse their learning until they get it better at it.

Effectiveness of mobile phone learning:

Effective use of mobile phones in learning English has been providing them not only with information and material, but also an efficient use of their learning time. Since, they don't have sight and it is difficult for them to read and write and whenever, the teacher gives the lectures in the class they record them and listen to them whenever they wanted. In the class if the teacher uses any new vocabulary which they don't understand and they immediately search in their mobiles to learn the meaning of it. VI learners, if they have any questions relating to their classroom teaching, they can instantly text to their teacher using mobile phones to get the answers. Mobile phones provide the context for real learning which means they can study the topic and apply it in the contexts where they are using it. Repetitive learning is possible with mobile phones as they can study one topic multiple times till they gain full understanding of it. The learners have mentioned that they their major mode of learning is by listening so they can listen to audio recordings of the class at any time and remember for longer period.

Challenges:

It is found that using mobile phones by VI learners is more difficult than the sighted learners. In most of the cases, if the mobile has any technical issues in the functioning of it, then it is difficult for them to identify the problem. Sighted learners can use their vision to use the mobile phone more effectively as they have the advantage of seeing and operating mobile phones. VI learners have to depend the jaws software or other screen reader to know the information displayed on the mobile phone. It is known from VI learners that when they are using any technology, be it computers or mobiles in the learning the language they cannot forward their topics which are not useful for them in the online because every aspect is read out will be read out for them for understanding. The issues of mobile charging makes them more frustrated in certain occasions of learning. In these kinds of situations they cannot use their peers mobiles as they didn't have the software which read out to them all the times.

Conclusion:

Development of technology and up gradation in mobile phones have not only transformed into other fields like business and economics but also language and education. Mobile phones and their effectiveness are really helping VI learners to become better at English language skills and perform like sighted learners. They are actually helping them to become independent learners where they take charge of their learning. There are also certain challenges which VI learners face is more original in the situations.

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