

TILTM 2020**Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication****INTEGRATING MOBILE PHONES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING OF NON-LINGUISTIC MASTER STUDENTS**

I. I. Kazieva (a)*, S. A. Burikova (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) RUDN, Mickloukho-Maklaya,6, Moscow, Russia, kazieva-ii@rudn.ru

(b) Mickloukho-Maklaya,6, Moscow, Russia, burikova-sa@rudn.ru

Abstract

Mobile learning (m-learning) has paved its way into almost every classroom. It has recently emerged as a new type of learning model which allows learners to obtain learning materials anywhere and anytime, which can be defined as the use of mobile or wireless devices for educational purposes while on the move (Campbell,2005). An impressive array of studies proved that m-technology is beneficial for foreign language learning. M-technology is used for many purposes enhancing such skills as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication – some of the 21-st century skills. The role of a teacher stopped being sacred and traditional – the “teacher centered” approach to teaching is losing its role. The youth of the 21-st century tends to use technology to adapt to educational requirements. The sweeping changes that teachers and students undergo make them face challenges to reshape approaches and methods of teaching and learning English. MALL has the greatest potential to facilitate learning of formal and informal language. The author overviews the possible ways of using phone in classroom, making the most of MALL. The paper considers how popular devices can boost motivation with busy master students, while raising their self-esteem and confidence, and how efficient these tools can be at advanced levels.

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1. Introduction

The field of foreign language teaching is changing at an ever rapid pace. Traditional approaches of foreign language teaching are giving way to innovative methods of learning, teaching, and gaining knowledge. This paper is aiming at considering some aspects of language teaching based on ICC, namely mobile phones, and at looking into current trends in foreign language teaching. “It is worth stating that one assumption underpinning this research is that students, and their needs, hopes and aspirations must be kept at the heart of language learning and education” (Eaton, 2010, p. 14).

It is common knowledge that modern students have infinite access to a huge amount of resources and information at their fingertips. A good command of a foreign language helps them to become more competitive in job market, climb career ladder, and get a higher salary. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that knowledge of foreign languages is not sufficient. The 21-st century skills encompass critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity, and social skills (Stauffer, 2020). We shall mostly focus on the first four - critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication - that make a group of learning skills, as they teach students about the mental processes required to adapt and improve upon a modern work environment (Stauffer, 2020). In business environment, and accordingly for our master students of the Faculty of Economics of PFUR (RUDN) University, critical thinking is a core skill enabling them to maintain meaningful activity in their workplaces when they face problems. Creativity as the second skill from the learning category of 21st century skills is of importance, too, since creativity leads to innovation. And innovation in modern world and in business settings is central to an economy’s growth dynamics and by extension to employment growth dynamics in both the short and long run (Aghion & Akcigit, 2017). Collaboration - another learning skill - is equally important, and may become a core skill to overcome conflicts and even avoid insolvency (The European Law Institute, n.d.). Speaking about communication in terms of the 21-st century skills, we can’t but mention that communication is a key imperative for any team seeking profitability and smooth work. For management students, this skill may be of great help to avoid workplace misunderstanding and enable them to get their managerial ideas across, as well as to become members of a team. Moreover, this skill may serve as a link between critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. ICC, CALL, and MALL have become a permanent feature of today’s learning environment, and in this paper we would like to highlight how to increase the learning efficiency of our tech-savvy students, how to motivate them for learning, and what teachers of foreign languages should focus on. Fortunately, a wide range of studies and books dealing with CALL and MALL in a substantial way have recently come out providing professional commentary and useful intellectual input.

In *Weaving the Web*, the World Wide Web’s inventor Tim Berners-Lee quotes a speech made by the South African president Thabo Mbeki on how people should seize the new technology to empower themselves; to keep themselves informed about the truth of their own economic, political and cultural circumstances; and to give themselves a voice that all the world could hear (Lee, 1999). Mobile phones have become ubiquitous. There are more than 4.3 billion mobile phone users in the world among 7 billion people on the globe. Most people use their phones about 86 hours a month, which means that the gadgets have become part and parcel of almost everybody’s daily life.

The reason of popularity of mobile technologies can be explained by their obvious advantages—‘flexibility, low cost, small size, and user-friendliness, researchers are exploring how to use mobile technology to support language learning’ (Huang et al., 2012, pp. 273-282). At the same time we can’t but mention their obvious disadvantages, such as small screen size, limited presentation of graphics (Albers & Kim, 2001), and high dependence on networks failing sometimes to provide very high transmission capacity and etc. Despite such shortcomings, Thornton and Houser (2005) show that mobile devices can indeed be effective tools for delivering language learning materials to the students. Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) in their research of MALL ask whether and how mobile devices support collaborative practice in speaking and listening. Their study focuses on two domains –‘content-related’ and ‘design-related’ studies. These two approaches have become dominant in other studies, although “design-oriented studies” have come to the forefront when “creating authentic and/or social mobile learning environments” (Wong & Looi, 2011; Huang et al., 2012).

In this paper we tried to describe our empirical research, as published in English and Russian during the period 2000-2020, covering the efficiency of MALL in second and foreign language education and tried to highlight methodological, theoretical and linguistic knowledge trends.

2. Problem Statement

It goes without saying that the proliferation of mobile technology is increasing for learning purposes, as well as the significance of its use, which has become undisputable.

Foreign languages in Russia, especially English, have always been popular and are a highly marketable skill today, though being a challenge for most of learners. Students are facing lot of problems in learning English. Mobile technology may be very beneficial in case it is integrated into the learning process wisely and expertly to build up vocabulary and to alleviate listening skills. A huge variety of mobile apps, the Internet with YouTube lessons, numerous tests can become triggers and drivers in learning a foreign language. However, this process requires a structured approach in terms of guidance and assessment and should not be left unattended in the framework of University education.

3. Research Questions

In this paper we tried to find answers to the following important questions:

- 1) How do students perceive using m-technology?
- 2) Does m-technology enhance vocabulary building and boost other skills?
- 3) How efficient can m-technology be in acquiring academic skills by master students?

4. Purpose of the Study

This paper is aiming at describing a trend in m-learning with a focus on language learning. Its purpose is also to demonstrate how efficient m-learning can be for master students for that matter.

5. Research Methods

For the goals of our current research study, we resorted to quantitative and qualitative methods. The total number of our students was 65, of whom 27 were male and 38 female. All of them were doing their master course at RUDN University at the Department of Economics in their first or second year in four groups of 15, 17, 16 and 17 students. For quantitative analysis we designed a two-aspect questionnaire, while entry and exit tests offered them a questionnaire which consisted of 7 questions relating to the scope and usefulness of tasks they fulfill with the help of their mobile phones and their attitude or liking towards mobile phones for learning purposes.

6. Findings

In order to achieve the purposes of current research, we used both online and paper surveys. Paper surveys were offered with a view to see the reaction of the students to two different surveys. Bearing in mind research questions - how important a mobile phone is in language learning and what skills you think you improved learning English via mobile phone, we worked out two sets of questions. The first set was offered in paper form and included 3 questions ranking from 1 to 5. The second set included questions relating to the skills improvement and included 2 questions. When we started our experiment, the students were offered to write a short essay of 100 words on the subject ‘What makes a perfect manager?’ and to summarize an article from The Economist. At the end of the semester they were also offered to write a test of 100 words on ‘How to work successfully in an international company.’ Our survey covered 65 master students of the Department of Economics of our University.

We analyzed the received statistical data and are giving it now in the form of tables below.

Set 1.

Question 1. Do you use your mobile phone for learning English? (where 1 is never and 5 is always)

Table 01. Popularity of mobile phones for learning purposes

	1	2	3	4	5
Grp 1 (15 students)		2		12	1
Grp 2 (17 students)	1		6	9	1
Grp 3 (16 students)	1	1	8	7	
Grp 4 (17 students)		2	7	7	1
65	2	4	21	35	3
%	3%	6%	33%	54%	4%

Table 1 shows that about 50 per cent of our students use their mobile phones for learning a language, while only 5% always use it for learning purposes. 3% represent students who never use their phones preferring paper books and computers.

Question 2. How important is mobile phone in learning English? (answers from 1 for no to 5 for yes, very important)

Table 02. How important is mobile phone in learning English

	1	2	3	4	5
Grp 1 (15 students)			1	13	1
Grp 2 (17 students)			2	12	3
Grp 3 (16 students)			4	11	1
Grp 4 (17 students)		1	5	10	1
65 students	0	2	12	46	6
%	0	3%	18%	70%	9%

From Table 2 we can deduce a conclusion that 70% of the surveyed students find mobile phones important in learning English, while 9% think that mobile phones are very important and 18% consider this matter as important.

Question 3. Do you find it efficient to use mobile phone for language learning purposes? (answers from 1 for no to 5 yes, very much)

Table 03. Do you find it efficient to use mobile phone for language learning purposes

	1	2	3	4	5
Grp 1 (15 students)			5	5	5
Grp 2 (17 students)		1	5	6	5
Grp 3 (16 students)		2	1	7	6
Grp 4 (17 students)		2	2	6	7
65	0	5	13	24	23
%		7%	20%	37%	35%

The vast majority of the students (93%) were positive and very positive in their assessment of the mobile phone efficiency for language learning (Table 3).

Set 2

Question 1. What skills do you think mobile phones helped you to improve?

Table 04. What skills do you think mobile phones helped you to improve

	Reading	Vocabulary	Listening	Grammar	Writing
Grp 1 (15 students)	10	12	8	3	2
Grp 2 (17 students)	10	13	8	4	3
Grp 3 (16 students)	11	12	7	3	2
Grp 4 (17 students)	9	12	9	4	1

Analyzing the results of Table 4 we can confirm that using mobile phone was most instrumental in building vocabulary and enhancing reading skills. The same students were quite unhappy about their grammar and writing skills.

Question 2. Are you happy with your progress?

Table 05. Are you happy with your progress

	Yes	Quite happy	No
Grp 1 (15 students)	4	10	1
Grp 2 (17 students)	6	8	3
Grp 3 (16 students)	6	9	1
Grp 4 (17 students)	8	7	2

Table 5 supposes that most students were happy with their progress which was much dependent on the use of mobile phones.

In a new tech-environment, teachers are also challenged not to lag behind in terms of technology and motivate their students. For this purpose, we offered the to do the following types of creative tasks as their home activities. By doing this, we were aiming to look at their abilities to self-education. Whatsapp is a popular mobile messaging app, allowing a great variety of things such as exchanging unlimited messages, images, video and audio messages with the use of Internet.

How did we use Whatsapp?

- 1) We send an article from The Economist, for example asking them to send either an audio response or a written summary. (We may want them to answer one or two questions focusing on the exact wording. By doing this we try to teach them vocabulary and retain it).
- 2) We send a podcast to our students and ask them to comment on it and search the Internet for some extra information relating to the same topic.
- 3) Students may be asked to create a video-dialogue based on some news with focus on vocabulary used in the news.
- 4) Those students who were absent may get their homework and classwork by recording the lesson.
- 5) Students may create their own ending to a story sending it to each other and then discuss whose ending was the most realistic or optimistic one, etc.
- 6) Get ready for an interview with some famous person and send him or her two questions - one about the future and one about the current situation.

Our students tend to use V Kontakte or Telegram rather than Facebook. They can create their closed groups where they can share homework projects, home assignments, classroom news, etc. By doing so we try to create a motivating atmosphere with each other and wit ensuring interaction and cooperation with the teacher supplying them with easily accessible tools on the go. As a result, they study at their own pace combining their busy life with study. Mobile apps keep them motivated creating self-esteem and self-confidence. We can confirm that trends of using mobile phones in English language learning are become dominant and are expanding. The data provided above reveals that today we evidence a growing awareness about the use of m-technology. The students are quite satisfied extensively using their mobiles and various apps daily and finding it helpful for learning English language. They strongly believe that m-technology enables them to build up vocabulary and improve other skills. They do not only consider it as a tool of information and communication but as a tool for education. The findings of this study reveal and can also prove that our students tend to have all their learning material on their mobile phone and is it is not only

enjoyable but also enhance the motivation level of students (Abdul Aziz, 2018). Both teachers and students have mobile phones at their disposal. So, the problem of time and space where you can learn language stopped being a significant drawback. Since mobile phones have become a popular source for learning English language, students prefer to study having fun and look for enjoyable ways of educating themselves watching films on Youtube, various chatrooms, blogs on various topics, which increases their motivation for learning. In this regard, a 24-hour availability is a big advantage for the learners.

The findings of the current research are much supported by El-Hariry's (2015) research about the usefulness of mobile technology. He explores that mobile devices are used dynamically in learning activities. His research concludes that moderate use of mobile phones may bring about much interest among EFL learners and makes the learning process easier by helping them to spiral up their self-esteem and self-confidence. These technologies are helpful in individual learning. With the advent of technology, the learning of English language is becoming easier and faster. Another research by Nalliveetil and Khaled-Alenazi (2016) in Saudi Arabia about the impact of mobile phones on English language learning strengthens the effectiveness of the current research.

A similar approach was adopted by Saricaa and Cavus (2009) in their study about the new trends in English learning. This research reveals that it is helpful and effective if teachers write notes and print them out to distribute to learners.

Our findings are that students perceive m-technology as an appropriate tool for learning foreign languages not only for communication and fun but also to create their own learning environment.

If we turn back to the 21-st century skills, in the survey our students produced a noticeable progress when we compared their entry essays with their exit essays and their summaries of the magazine articles.

The results may be seen in the table. The numbers in the columns mean average number of scores (the maximum score is 10).

Table 06. 21-st century skills

	Structure	Range of Vocabulary	Grammar	Cohesion
Entry essay	4	6	4	3
Exit essay	6	8	4	4
Entry summary	3	5	3	3
Exit summary	5	8	2	3

Table 6 suggests that when we compare scores for entry essay and entry summary with exit essay and exit summary there is a noticeable, though not very significant, progress in terms of structure, and cohesion. If we compare scores for grammar, we find the same level or even a decline in progress. These results make us come to the conclusion that grammar area is subject to extra attention from the teacher when using m-technology and requires extra effort from both sides by giving more exercises on the relating area of grammar. We cannot but mention that m-technology and various apps are mostly beneficial for doing simple things – checking the meaning or spelling or of the word in the dictionary or memorizing it. And these simple actions pertain to lower-level thinking. The table suggests that a higher level of thinking that encompasses summarizing, comparing and contrasting, or evaluation, etc. is not so beneficial and advantageous for master students with upper-intermediate or advanced levels of the language. Major non-linguistic students in University settings are taught mostly English for academic and professional purposes

and for these particular purposes m-technology cannot serve as a useful tool. In the framework of the 21-st century skills, m-technology may have both negative and positive impact. Communication skills are well supported by m-technology but the same cannot be true about critical thinking skills. Stockwell and Hubbard (2013) found both physical and pedagogical issues with MALL. In terms of physical issues, they specifically mention the screen size, battery life, and the processor speed of phones as problems. For pedagogical issues, they list that the task must be appropriate for the mobile phone. This may be the reason that flashcards and quizzes are so popular for mobile phones as they are highly useful in allowing students to work whenever it is convenient for them. There might arise one more pedagogical issue with mimicing off-line class in m-learning class. Such a 100% transfer turns out to be hardly possible due to many reasons, one of which is motivation of the students and their performance during classes. The teacher will be have to stick to a new criteria of follow-up when students are reluctant to follow the teacher's instructions relating to MALL tasks.

Looking at the drawbacks of MALL, Stockwell and Hubbard (2013) developed several concepts to keep in mind when conducting M- or mobile learning. One, teachers need to be observant of the limitations of MALL. This includes the disadvantages already discussed. Two, teachers should limit texting. One obvious reason for this is the cost involved. Three, MALL tasks should be kept short in order to assure student completion. Lastly, students who need support should be trained in using their smartphone and or the app that is required to complete the assignment. This point was shared earlier but even though we live in a digital age, there are still many who are not the tech savvy enough to complete MALL task (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013).

7. Conclusion

Mobile phone has become an indispensable gadget of our daily life. Despite the wide spread of popular mythology that mobile phones are going to have a negative impact on the future of education and language learning, that teaching standards will be aggravated, we would propose the reverse. Technology and mobile phones are going to be increasingly vital in education. It is evident that we have faced a marked shift from teacher-led learning, or face-to-face learning, to student-led education based on m-learning. The vast majority of students find m-technology more engaging and fruitful, as by using m-technology students create their own language environment where they can learn a language when they want how long they want in most preferable conditions. MALL technology is rather new. though very popular, and widely studied by an array of researchers. At the same time, it is providing the widest array of opportunities in the range and variety of language, along with unlimited opportunities for creativity of those who use it [M-technology]. Internet is around long enough enabling us to take a view about the way in which it is being shaped by and shaping language learning methods (Crystal, 2004).

We can assume that mobile apps are used not only for communication but are widely used for educational purposes and language learning, namely. Nowadays, usage of mobile phone is a key compenence of a digital literacy, which is likely to expand more and more to solve numerous needs of students and their teachers.

“The main characteristic of M-Learning can be the discretion of the learner. It lies in the hands of the learner to decide upon the place and time for language learning. The outbreak of mobile learning makes

it harder for anyone to arrive at a stable concept because of the availability of new mobile devices in the market” (El-Hussein & Cronje, 2010, pp. 12-21). But only the synergy between the student, the teacher, and m-technology may bring fruitful results in teaching languages.

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