



## INTEGRATING MOBILE TECHNOLOGY IN ESL CLASSROOMS

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### **Abstract:**

It's the right time to know more about mobile technology and mobile learning in the present digital era where mobile phones have become an integral part of everyone's life. In recent years there have been amazing advances in mobile technology. Mobile learning has enabled various institutions, colleges and schools throughout the world in order to modernize aspects of teaching, learning and training. The key words in mobile learning are "facilitate, support, enhance, extend".

**Key Words:** Mobile, Technology, SMS, Dictionary & Vocabulary

### **Introduction:**

There is now a wealth of examples of innovative ways in which mobile technology can be used to enhance learning both within the formal classroom and in informal settings (Ally, 2009). The viral growth of mobile technology and its application has made a greater impact in the field of communication and also in education. The integration of mobile technology and its applications allow teachers and learners to explore different strategies in m-learning. Mobile technologies are the new frontier for teaching and learning in institutions of higher education. What can you do with a device such as a mobile phone? How can we integrate mobile technology in teaching English as a second language? Mobile technology offers innumerable practical uses in English language learning. A mobile phone is no match for a computer in handling various types of information such as visual, sound, and textual information, but it is superior to a computer in portability. Mobile phones can be easily utilized outside and inside the classroom. It's no wonder when a student asks your pen for writing when you dictate something and the borrowing of half torn sheets from his/her friends is quite common. The mobile phone has become an artificial organ of the human body. Mobile phones have become a part of our daily life. Life has become indispensable without mobile phones. It has become quite common to see an elderly woman in a village who had received no education has a mobile phone with her and talks to her friends and relatives and uses it even to check time and date.

### **SMS & MMS:**

The most powerful mobile technologies which can be used as a medium of learning are the Short Message Service (SMS) technology. SMS vocabulary lessons can be sent to ESL learners and the learners can read their messages literally anytime, everywhere – while commuting, between classes, or even before going to bed. For example, we have various websites which offer Vocabulary lessons like [www.wordsmith.org](http://www.wordsmith.org), [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com), [dictionary.reference.com/wordoftheday](http://dictionary.reference.com/wordoftheday), and so on. You can even ask learners to subscribe for vocabulary service pack. Students would prefer to learn through mobile phones than PCs, because mobile phones are more convenient than PCs in this situation. Special message boosters can be used for teaching and learning the English language with a wide range of opportunities for integrating text into teaching and learning strategies. The students will have positive perceptions about the use of SMS for learning and the use of their own mobile phones as a learning tool. They will find it interesting in receiving education content via SMS which would greatly improve their language learning performance.

Short Message Service technology might prove especially effective for learning vocabulary, vocabulary items can be presented through relatively short, discrete definitions with examples that suit the screen dimensions and general handling capabilities of a mobile phone. SMS based vocabulary learning will be able to enhance ESL students learning by adding flexibility and providing a stronger motivation for study. SMS is the most reliable and popular message communication on mobile phones today. Presently, students mainly make use of their mobile phones educationally to contact staff and fellow students. This is most usually via voice, but students also use short message service (SMS), although to a lesser extent (Cheung, 2004). Although voice makes up the bulk of carrier revenue in Australia, the prediction is that non-voice services such as SMS, multimedia messaging service (MMS) and mobile packet data services will show strong growth over the next few years (Chaisatien, 2004).

The technology service which can be used is free SMS facilities which are readily available online such as [way2sms.com](http://way2sms.com). This system service allows SMS text message to be prepared well in advance and then, when required, they may be sent to a large group of people via e-mail and a PC. The sender can create instant, scheduled and delayed message across all networks, regardless of the carrier. So, for example, a message may be prepared in advance and then scheduled to be sent to a group of student's mobile phones on a certain day at

certain time in the future. The sender can nominate the intervals at which the message will be sent again. The message limit which can be used is 140 characters so we need to tailor our lessons according to it. Now, the teacher prepares a message for students and then he/she have to log in to way2sms.com and then select future message option and then select the date and timings for the message to be delivered. And, then after selecting the task is complete and the scheduled message will reach the students at the exact time mentioned.

Unlike SMS, MMS is the more recent mobile messaging application. Therefore, fewer educational institutions have begun to test MMS as a potential teaching and learning tool. Similar to SMS, the MMS offers automatic and immediate delivery of personal messages. However, MMS can deliver all types of information, such as text messages, sound, images, and video messages. In the near future, the use of SMS and MMS will potentially be increased in the education field as technology improves (Trifonova, 2003).

#### **Dictionary:**

An offline mobile dictionary helps the user to access 5,00,000 English words, references and examples. These dictionaries are regularly updated and they are an easy way to refer to words.

Mobile applications can be installed in mobile phones which come with various dictionary applications. A few of the available mobile dictionaries are Oxford Concise Dictionary, Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, Collins Dictionary and many more. There are even applications such as thesaurus and idioms and phrases where the learner can refer to synonyms and phrases.

The students can take 5 to 10 words per day and the students can learn during the travel or break time. The teachers can assign assignments to students and check them on weekly or daily basis. The mobile application can make the work easier for both teacher and student. This method would definitely enrich their vocabulary in a more easier way than a traditional classroom.

#### **Pronunciation Application:**

Macmillan Education has designed Sounds an English pronunciation aid for learners and teachers. An application that is compatible with mobile phones. The application comes with an interactive phonemic chart where the learner or the teacher has to tap to hear a sound, or tap and hold to hear the sound and an example word. The Pronunciation Application helps one to study, practise and play with pronunciation and it does not require an internet connection. For example: When 'j' symbol is tapped we can hear the sound 'sh' and then with we can practice the sound for n number of times and then wordlist is given with every sound for guidance.

This free version includes an Interactive Phonemic Chart and the user will be able to look up, listen to and record words in the wordlist; practise pronunciation skills; test with the pronunciation quizzes; use the phonemic typewriter; and can learn with top tips, videos and so on.

#### **Word Building Games:**

In Macmillan Software: English pronunciation aid for learners and teachers in games and quizzes section there are exercises on English Grammar. You can also browse to refer <http://www.iatefl.org.pl/call/callnl.htm> for further guidance.

- ✓ In the first section of the games there are a series of sentences, which do not follow correct sentence construction.
  - With each word in a sentence a unique integer is attached.
  - The user is required to arrange these integer values in a proper manner to match it with the correct sentence pattern.
- ✓ The second section includes sentences, which are grammatically incorrect.
  - The user's job is to select the integer with incorrect word/phrase.
  - The pop-up window appears as soon as the user clicks the mobile button corresponding to integer.
  - This pop-up window contains various options out of which the user has to choose one for correctness.
- ✓ At the end of the entire exercise, a feedback mechanism is generated.

The other facilities which can be utilised with same effectiveness in mobile phones are: audio files, Video files Images/camera, Internet, Task manager/reminder, Pdf/word, Bluetooth. The organisational tools such as alarms, calendar and the note taking facilities - whether text-based or with the use of voice recording - can really support learners inside and outside the classroom. A camera can capture a moment in still or video image, which is a great way to collect assessment evidence for a portfolio. File sharing using Bluetooth can be fun, but equally useful to collect other learners' notes or tutors' handouts at the end of sessions or lectures. And SMS is being increasingly used to support learners by sending vital information about the term, room changes, and the transport system or just purely as a reminder to achieve certain assignments.

Of course, communication is not confined to peer-to-peer. It can involve teachers, experts, experienced colleagues, workmates, friends and family. The mobile environment can make a significant contribution to this process. By facilitating the rapid access to other users any time/any place, sharing content, knowledge, experience and gossip, learners can develop 'communities of practice' (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002) as well as informal discussion groups, as and when needed to optimize their learning processes.

Finally, the use of mobile devices can provide greater choice and flexibility so that learning can become more personalised. For example, introducing a multimedia dimension such as capturing or playing audio, digital images or video files in any situation can bring learning to life for those who need – or prefer – to access their learning through particular sensory routes.

**Conclusion:**

Mobile Learning is therefore associated with the following characteristics, any of which can be exploited to add value to traditional models of learning and teaching: spontaneity, immediacy, flexibility, interactivity, informality, cultural capital, personal control. Mobile phone in teaching English is not a new concept in fact, it has been there for many years. But unfortunately in the Indian education system, it has not been encouraged. To use these emerging technologies successfully, administrators, educators, teachers and learners must think critically to determine how to use the new technologies to achieve their educational goals, rather than greet the new technologies with uncritical excitement.

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