

M-Learning for Digital Immigrant Language Teachers

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Abstract

This writing intends to explore the benefits of using m-learning (Mobile phone Learning) to support teaching and learning process for digital immigrant teachers. Digital immigrant teachers are those who want to move from conventional way to more technology enhanced language learning. The exploration on using facilities of mobile learning for classroom teaching will enable teachers to make use of internet access, to pursue their students' technology literacy, to access to a wealth of ready-made ELT materials and to integrate technologies of mobile phone into teaching.

The exploration found that teachers can use many applications of their mobile phone from simple to sophisticated ones. They can use texting facilities (sms) for checking students' work progress, use free social media to give consultation, and many other features that facilitate them to transfer knowledge and help students in learning either in or out of classroom. Certainly, they also need to consider the flaws in mobile phone and keep learning to be familiar with technology development.

Keywords: Mobile learning, digital immigrant teachers, technology.

Why should be Mobile Phone?

Electronic devices become superstar in this millennium and digital era. The producers of Personal computer, internet, television, Mobile Phone , laptop, digital camera, interactive whiteboard, etc seem to compete each other to attract people with their advance technologies. The technology booming also enter into classroom teaching. Conventional instruction that centre on teacher is regarded to be ineffective anymore. Teachers need technology to assist their teaching and one of popular digital technology products currently used by most teachers is mobile phone. Mobile phone or hand phone, mobile, cellular phone, cell phone brings more functional usages for teachers. Mobile Phones (MP) can create multimedia content, display high

quality color screens, edit texts and images, play back video, audio, photographs (Boyle in Bradley *et al*, 2009). He also mentioned that MP has greater storage capacities now, and has networking connectivity with PCs, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi.

The users nowadays have really been spoiled with amazing advance technology in their MP. MP provides almost all people need with technology, like short message service (sms), multimedia services (mms), browsing, downloading, camera, game, teleconference, video call, television, remote control, etc. It also enables users to access the internet through the high end technologies such as GPRS, EDGE and HSDPA, sending emails, sharing content, taking pictures, and so forth. (See <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/latest-mobile-phones-appealing-looks-and-advanced-technologies.html>). You should not go home to watch TV, go to laboratory to access internet in PC, rent CD to compile MP3 songs, bring camera to recording or taking pictures, keep tape recorder to record your lectures, and so on. This superb facilities attract more people to buy MP. UN News Centre reports that MP subscribers to hit 4 billion this year (www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=2825). In Indonesia, the number of mobile phone users could more than double to 100 million by 2010 as a low penetration rate in the world's fourth most populous country offers huge potential (from *The Edge Daily (Malaysia)*. – March 20, 2006. http://www.indonesiaottawa.org/information/details.php?type=news_copy&id=2310).

Moreover, a teacher can create a typical distance learning environment using MP in places where personal computer and internet cannot work as MP offers advanced programming and easy to handle. (Multisilta *et al*: 2003). She informed that even children in Finland have special interests to using MP and they want to buy their phones themselves-not as being a gift or second-hand items.

Unfortunately, this mobile learning device is not used optimally yet by the teachers to teaching and learning English in the classroom in some EFL countries, like Indonesia. Worse, students in secondary schools and lower are not allowed to use MP during the class due to technology abuses. In fact, the uses of MP in the classroom offer great easiness and challenge toward teacher s and students, especially in universities. Some advance countries such as European countries, China, Japan, Philippines have already began using cell phones, or mobile phones, as learning tools (Prensky, 2005 in Jonassen, et. all, 2008). If those developed counties

could do, why developing countries cannot?. There are some reasons why MP need to be promoted in EFL context, i.e.:

1. Most people, students as well, and teachers have MP and are familiar to use it. MP can be used either synchronously or asynchronously, simple procedures to use, possible for multi ways-conferences
2. The MPs are affordable. In a country like Indonesia, even, people can have second MP with crazy cheap prices
3. MP is almost become a necessity for teachers and students for communication matters.
4. The communication providers, like Excelcommindo, Telkomsel, Indosat, Lebara, Optus, and many others spoil their consumers with abundant facilities and services.
5. Recently, only few teachers have made use of MP to assist them in teaching. So, giving them knowledge of using it in their teaching will give them alternatives media to teach

Implications for teacher and students

Promoting MP technology into classroom teaching certainly bring consequences and implications for both teacher and students. Teacher must religious his/her intellectual authorities, shift his/her roles from dispersing knowledge to helping learners' construct more viable, gain some familiarities with the technology, skills and fluency in using it, help students discover meaningful concepts and to make self-evaluation. Meanwhile, for students, application of MP technology will implies on some points: they have to develop skills in articulating , reflecting on, and evaluating what they know, setting goals , regulating their activities and learning efforts, and collaborating and conversing with peers and the teacher. (Jonassen *et al*, 2008: vi-viii).

Applications of Mobile Phone Technology in the Classroom: Case studies

For many teachers, using MP for teaching English could be something new, and unimaginable. They think MP is enough for communication purposes only. Whereas, it has greater functions. They can provide testing practice, interview students, record drama or role-play, streaming, tell about an image, answer quizzes, warn assignment due dates. Students can also get information of learning material quickly, doing submission online, sending messages instantly, request confirmation, and so forth. In some circumstances, telecommunication providers offers free chat, Sms, video call for its clients, e.g. *Telkomsel, Pro-Xl- Optus and*

Lebara. Thus, a teacher can ask all her/his students to have same simcard in the same time or activate their double simcard facilities from their MP. S/he also could encourage students to use email, browsing, and downloading, uploading or other internet-based facilities to support the learning process.

Some teachers in the world have made experiments in it. Bradley and his colleagues (2009) have conducted action research to apply Flash Lite programs for their students using Nokia 91 type. It is designed to develop multimedia learning and content for MP which is interactive, highly visual, engaging, and effective for learners, that is Making a Reference. In Russia, China, and Far East, Motorola recently developed the Wireless Local Loop (WiLL) system in which enable teachers to use cellular type telephone system to support their teaching activities (Liana, 1995). The UK Open University has used multi-way phone conferences to support distance learning in remote areas. It takes few minutes to get a tutorial group of 8 people connected and it works well with any protocol rules. (George, 1998 in Maier & Warren, 2000). Dudeney & Hockly (2007) mentions some successful mobile phones-assited learning projects: Agnes-Kukulska-Hulme (<http://iet.open.ac.uk/pp/a.m.kukulska-hulme/agnes.html>) in Italy, Mobile CALL Projects (<http://www.studypatch.net/mobile>) in Japan, JALT-CALL (<http://jaltcall.org/news/>) in Japan. They also propose MP-based teaching and learning activities ranging from beginners to Advanced levels (p.157-158).

Weaknesses of Mobile Phone and Its Application in Teaching & learning

Instead of those benefits, teachers must be also aware of their flaws; small size screen to read, insufficient storage spaces compared to computer, breakable, easy to be left or disappear, radiation issue, weak signals, expensive connection cost, teachers' and students' low skills and fluency in using MP, unsecure download, and impossibility for the teachers to control their students, and easy to hack into.

As the nature of technology to adjust with market demand, the emerging product of mobile phone has offered facilities to solve those problems. Now teachers can purchase any mobile phone with larger screen from 5-7" (phonelet) to get wider display. Producer such as ASUS and LENOVO has manufactured MP with memory capacity up to 16 gigabytes excluded

external memory that may store data until 64 gb. For signal issue, facility of WIFI in campus will be reliable to support stable connection. As an alternative, some data providers such as SIMPATI, XL, IM3 and many others provide reasonable package data. Take for example, teachers need spend rp 40.000 only to have 5 gb data from Simpati. It is enough for browsing, downloading and streaming works for about one month. The remaining problems like users' low skill and misbehavior controlling can be prevented through regular training and monitoring system.

Challenges for future

Flaws the teacher found in promoting MP technology above should not be constraints to continue the teachers' enlightening actions. Those weaknesses, in contrast, shall assume as challenges in the future. Some challenges teachers and students should deal with probably are:

- a. To integrate the mobile learning and students' own phone into campus-based teaching designs coherently
- b. To create more contents supporting teaching and learning activities, m-portfolios, online assignment, interactive peer learning room, etc
- c. To arrange mutual cooperation with mobile device manufacturers and information and communication providers to make multimedia contents available more on students' MP with affordable prices, quick access, and environment-friendly.
- d. To build an integrated campus transmission unit which enable students and other related parties in university community may run content programs in their MP cheaply, -or free may be-, fast speed on accessing, downloading and uploading the information or given tasks,
- e. To schedule regularly intensive effective trainings for teachers to upgrade their skills and fluencies in integrating MP technology into their teaching practices.

In addition, Cui & Wang (2008) suggested elements and steps to be considered and to take advantage of MP best:

1. Attitudes: the teachers should advocate and promote the integration of MP in teaching and learning fields and put necessary attention to students' abuses on it.

2. Prepare quality multimedia materials online: the online teaching system has abilities to convert traditional classical lectures to the online format and encourage students to learn English interestingly
3. Transmission system: the university has to cooperate with telecommunications companies to maintain and upgrade the MP transmission system to create comfortable environment for students
4. Teachers' training. As the key factor in this application, teachers should become familiar with all updated technology in MPs, and acquire essential skills to apply it
5. Students' participation. Students should have basic computer literacy and actively engage in using updated technology of MP
6. Development of MP and its application: telecommunication and information companies, programmers, game designers and other facilities providers should produce more meaningful and inspiring technologies for students.

Conclusion: What Teachers Must Do?

Changes always assume risks. In the MP case, shifting from traditional ways of teaching into digital technology is not really a piece of cake for teachers. A lot of things have to do. Many tasks should be prepared. Teacher must be familiar with the technology in MP before assigning the students to do so. S/he should encourage his/ her students to make technology as friend, and upgrade his/ her knowledge, skills, and abilities on and on. However, considering our job as a professional, I invite myself and you all to take those risks. We have to be adjustable with the emerging improvement in education and technology.

According to Bradley *et al* (2009) in their research, the students' feedback on application of *Flash Lite* has been extremely positive, and is very encouraging (83%). They think that accessing learning materials via MP is something cool, brilliant, handy, useful, engaging, interesting and enjoyable. These students' excitement and enthusiasm in using MP technology for improving their knowledge is much more valuable than sufficient rewards for taking the risks. Rethinking any problems may arise, considering available options, finding creative solutions, adapting the technology with local conditions, stimulating him/herself to be always technology-adapted, and keep promoting students to engage in technology are the best principles a teacher needs to have. This is unwise anymore for university teachers or students of EFL

context to use their mobile phones for personal business only. It is nonproductive actions when they silent or switch off their MP during class meeting. Now, it is a right time for them to take more academic intellectual actions and to integrate technology with education, i.e. by promoting mobile phone (MP) in EFL language teaching and learning environment.

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