PRACTITIONERS AS INNOVATORS: EMERGENT PRACTICE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING LANGUAGE THROUGH MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

DR. VIKAS RAVAL

Assistant Professor of English and Communication Skills,
Gujarat Power Engineering and Research Institute,
Mehsana, Gujarat. (**INDIA**)

ABSTRACT

Mobile technology has become commonplace tools, yet people have less awareness to use this technology for teaching and learning purpose. In this research paper the researcher reported on an investigation into personal mobile device used by teachers and students. The study identified various types of activities undertake, and focused on emerging issues in relation to innovative practices. Participants described their uses of four types of devices (mobile phone, smart phones, PDA and MP3 player), the frequency of specific uses, and their views on the advantages of mobile learning.

Key terms: *mobile assisted language learning, education technology, constructivism*

INTRODUCTION:

Mobile learning has reached the stage where the adopters are making extensive use of mobile and wireless technologies across a broad range of contexts and applications. Evidence is provided by the availability of research studies that show how educators are taking advantage of mobile learning to bring about significant enhancements and transformations in their teaching and learning process. Mobile devices have also become commonplace tools serving a wide array of purposes that may include teaching and learning alongside work and leisure in both formal and informal settings.

The researcher was interested to find out more about the ways in which those who are engaged in teaching and learning use mobile technologies, particularly in relation to spontaneous learning and teaching practices and the intersection with daily life and work. Edwards (2005) suggests that users of various mobile devices should try out activities they haven't tried before (such as subscribing to news, accessing location-based content, viewing video and listening to audio).

The research project in this paper was an investigation of how mobile technologies are creatively used by teachers and students of Gujarat Power Engineering and Research Institute, Mehsana (Gujarat). Teachers and students are typically experienced practitioners working in the education sector and many of them are keen users of new technology. A number of teachers and students rigorously participated in the research work and enjoyed the opportunity to explore the use of mobile devices as part of a research project. The researcher has also focused on the effective use of mobile technology in teaching and learning process. Edwards (2005) has noted that it is important to think beyond repurposing content for distribution on mobile and to focus more on understanding how people communicate, collaborate, and learn.

The existing research aims to contribute the understanding of innovative practice at the level of the individual empowered by a personal mobile device and social networks that may amplify or modify its use. In his role as disseminators of innovative e-learning practice both to teachers and students in the college, the researcher also aims to use the research to help inform those who are interested in the potential of mobile learning, who are designing learning with a specific type of mobile device in mind, or who own a mobile device but may not be making the most of it for their own teaching and learning. The researcher would like to see more widespread discussion of how users can best discover and develop the potential of their mobile devices, individually and collectively, and the researcher hopes the research can help raise the profile of that discussion.

REVIEW OF LITERATAURE:

In evolving definitions of mobile learning, we are seeing technology focused approaches being gradually superseded by interpretations that seek to locate mobile learning within broader educational frameworks, taking account of social and philosophical dimensions (Traxler 2005; Laouris 2005). The context for this is the rapidly changing landscape of teaching and learning. The growing importance of lifelong and informal learning has a special connection with the affordances of mobile technologies. Whilst this has long been emphasized by Sharples (1999), it has taken some time to gain momentum.

Scanlon et al. (2005) have been exploring what possibilities exist for language learners in informal settings, and in projects across many subject domain it is not unusual now to find a stated aim of developing systems or materials for informal learning. For example, Fallahkhair et al. (2005) have developed a system to support informal mobile language learning, while Bradley et al. (2005) report on the development of materials for a mobile local history tour. Vavoula et al. (2005) have studied mobile learning to non mobile learning, and found "indications that mobile learning is more interactive, involves more 'bustle', more contact, communication and collaboration with people". (p-17).

In relation to teaching practices and mobile devices, Leach et al. (2005) have been investigating the impact of new portable technologies on teachers' practices in the context of their professional development. The work shows very clearly that personal uses such as diary and address book functions go hand-in-hand with successful use of the same mobile device for planning teaching and collecting resources for teaching. Wishart's (2006) research in the use of PDAs in initial teacher training gives similar findings concerning the integration of the PDA as both personal organizer and a tool for making notes on information and events as they are encountered.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

(1) Does the use of mobile technologies permit language teachers to teach virtually beyond the four walls of the classroom?
(2) Does the use of mobile technologies permit the students for increased understanding of concepts?
(3) Does independent learning permit for students to complete work in class with teacher assistance, reducing workload and stress in language classroom while still increasing content knowledge?

PARTICIPANTS AND METHODOLOGY:

The existing small scale research work was carried out on 2 language teachers and 60 students (23 females, 37 males) of first year degree engineering college. They were tested in English language course through the use of mobile technologies in teaching and learning process. Two separate questionnaires were prepared for teachers and students. The questionnaires contained both quantitative and qualitative questions relating to the use of different types of devices (namely mobile phones, smart phones, PDAs, MP3 players) in four types of activities:

- Teaching
- Learning
- Social interaction
- Entertainment

It covered the use of mobile devices as part of designing activities for the language learners, the frequency of specific uses (such as browsing websites, reading e-news, sharing media files etc) and users' views on the advantages and disadvantages of mobile teaching and learning. The questionnaires were sent to teachers and students.

The main section of the questionnaires focused on the use of mobile devices for various purposes. Respondents were asked to give one or more examples in detail to show how they

used and continue to use the devices for the above mentioned four different types of activities. The researcher was mainly interested in teaching and learning. Despite this, the two remaining categories were included in order to examine the other areas of use which can be used to enhance for teaching and learning process.

The result of questionnaires is reported with special regard to these aspects. The researcher also conducted interview and he selected seven interviewees (two teachers and five students). The selection was carried out on the basis of their responses in the questionnaires. The researcher's approach was broadly phenomenological. In relation to the data arising from the interviews, the researcher was interested in gathering individual stories. The interview explains the ways in which respondents are using mobile devices in diverse situations, and they provide right insights into user choices in relation to contexts of use and personal preferences.

The interviewees talked about their choices of device, the content of their activities, and the contexts in which they used their devices. The findings of the interview are covered briefly in this research paper.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

Results of the study indicated that use of differentiation and independent study, through the implementation of the flipped classroom model, was successful. The following are the major findings of the research work:

(1) **Mobile Technologies help language teachers to become creative in teaching and evaluation process:** Generally, teacher is seen as the person who is the centre of the classroom and his/her main task is to deliver the content within the given time frame. The concept of mobile technologies has changed this traditional role of teacher; now teacher is creator of online activities and he/she is present 24/7 with the students virtually. Moreover, evaluation is no more traditional but it has become revolutionary with the help of mobile technologies.

(2) Mobile technologies have made teachers techno savvy: Language teacher is 21st century is no more performing traditional role of teacher; he/she has become techno savvy and inverted the classroom through creative use of technology for teaching and learning process.

(3) **Mobile Technologies help busy students**: Students today are busy; they are involved in multi-tasking. Limited time and many activities. Our students appreciate the flexibility of mobile technologies. Because the main content is delivered via online medium. Students can choose to work ahead. Some students went for extracurricular

activities and they missed important lectures; due to mobile technologies they didn't miss any lecture.

(4) **Mobile Technologies help struggling students**: When we taught in traditional classroom, the students of first few rows were the best and brightest- students who would raise their hands first and ask great questions. The rest of the students would passively listen to the conversation without any interest. But due to creative use of mobile technologies, teacher's role has changed; we spend most of the time walking around and helping the students who struggle most.

(5) **Mobile Technologies help students of all abilities to excel**: Students with special needs may watch online content or video as many times as they need to learn the material. No more blindly copying notes with the hope that they will understand them later. Instead, students can pause their teacher, rewind their teacher, and make sure they actually learn the important concepts.

(6) **Mobile Technologies allow students to pause and rewind their teacher**: As educators, we prefer traditional class room since we expect the students to learn a given body of knowledge in the classroom only. Most of the time we expect that the students understand everything taught in the classroom. With the help of mobile technologies we gave the students control of the remote. Giving the students liberty to pause and rewind the teacher as many times as possible. 24/7 teacher is ready to solve their doubts. It is revolutionary concept.

(7) **Mobile Technologies increase student-teacher interaction**: The traditional classroom is teacher centric and it is one way communication. The students hardly meet the teacher to solve their doubts. While in mobile assisted learning, the teacher is present virtually and physically in order to help the students. Teacher gets ample time to interact with the students.

(8) **Mobile Technologies help classroom management:** In the traditional set up, we had students who did not pay attention in the classroom. They students were often distractions to the rest of the class. When we use mobile technologies in the class, we discovered something amazing. Many of the classroom management problems decreased. Class time is primarily used for students to either do hands on activities or work in a small group.

The following are some reflections from the teachers and students:

From teachers:

"Effective use of mobile technology made my teaching easier and education more accessible for students. By placing work in the cloud, students can access information when they want it and wherever they are. It was really thrilling experience to me."

"Students are very thankful when I make work more accessible using mobile technology. They have their notes saved digitally and their texts available online"

From students:

"I really liked the combination of different mobile technologies to learn the subject interestingly. It helped me understand the different parts of the topics and the different arguments for some important issues...."

"We stayed on track at all times, all videos and other activities were posted on time and whatever was not understood was explained during class time. I did not feel any pressure from this class throughout the year."

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

The sample of the present study being small for getting more conclusive picture and greater generalization ability, a study involving a large sample may be carried out.

A similar type of study can be replaced by including all the teachers- students who have English language as their subject of teaching and learning.

Various types of education technologies can be incorporated in order to implement mobile technology model effectively in the traditional classroom.

The same experiment may be carried out by adopting other experimental designs of experimental study.

REFERENCE

Anderson, K. M. (2007). Tips for teaching: Differentiating Instruction to Include All Students. Preventing School Failure, 51(3), 49-54. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Edwards, R 2005. Your employees are increasingly mobile, is your learning? Proceedings, mLearn 2005, October 25-28, Cape Town, South Africa.

Gardner, H. (1993) Multiple intelligences: The theory in practice. New York: Basic

DR. VIKAS RAVAL   6P a g e

Books.

Reichmann, S. & Grasha, A.F. 1974, A rational approach to developing and assessing the construct validity of a student learning scale instrument, Journal of Psychology, 87(2), 213-23.

Sharples, M. 1999. The design of personal technologies to support lifelong learning. Proceedings, CAL '99 *conference on computer-assisted learning,* London

Traxler, J. 2005. Defining mobile learning. Proceedings, IADIS international conference on mobile learning , Malta

Tomlinson, C. A. (1993). Independent Study: A Flexible Tool for Encouraging Academic and Personal Growth. Middle School Journal, 25(1), 55-59Lage, Platt and Treglia, (2000)

Wishart J. 2006. Personal Digital Assistants: Teachers prefer the personal. Paper presentation, mLearn 2006, October, Banff, Canada.