Mobile Technology Exploitation in English Vocabulary Learning

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Abstract: Language teaching has urbanized in the recent years. Many approaches have been proposed to ease language teaching or learning. Videos, movies, songs, comics, newspapers and magazines are all familiar to teachers and students and they have proved to be, in most cases, very effective because they are strongly related to everyday life. Among these teaching aids, songs and music are materials that best reflect students’ concerns as they often relate to important trends in modern society and enjoy songs because of their authentic cultural content. On the other hand, mobile technology has also changed the attitude of students. The advent 3G technology offers need high resolution cameras, high resolution display screens, integrated music players, stereo FM radio, Internet connectivity and many more features which are attractive to youngsters. This study explores various benefits these features can be of using music in iPad and smart phone in English vocabulary learning among generation Y.

Key words: 3G Technology, iPad, Music and Shih Model

INTRODUCTION

The usage of mobile technologies such as iPads and smart phones are common among present generation. Digital Media Across Asia report (2012) shows that mobile penetration rate is 129% per 100 Malaysians and among the users, 85% of them are between the age group of 18 to 25. Moreover, Prensky (2005) stated that mobile technology like the iPad and smart phones become a personal asset of every student in every institution. Nevertheless, students use the mobile technology like an iPad and smart phone constantly in every walk of their life except for education (Desmond, 2008).

Not only that when the generation Y enters into higher education, their learning and teaching is problematic and outdated (Alexander 2004). This is why many researchers stated that our educational system needs to be innovative (Kimber et al., 2002; Alexander, 2004; Oblinger & Oblinger 2004; Barone et al., 2005). To keep up with the trend, universities have to adopt new technologies and have to change their approaches to focus on students’ needs in learning environment. Therefore there is need to identify those new, pedagogies that integrate the use of mobile technologies in the context of authentic approaches.

Subsequently, Prensky (2001) stated that students’ perception about technology is far different from university and faculty members. Very often teachers suffer in searching didactic model and it is challenging for them to emerge mobile technologies knowing that the students are more technology –competent than they are themselves. Thus, The Horizon Report (2008) has confirmed that the gap between student’s perception of technology and the faculty members continues to be widened. Students and faculties continue to view and experience the technology very differently than faculty members. This study is very important to keep pace with students’ needs on technology and to narrow down the gap between the faculty members and the students.

GSMArena team (2011) reported that 95.3% of mobile device users listen music daily among them 80.2% are aged between 18 to 24. It confirms that students are spending most of the time on listening music through their mobile devices like iPads or smart phone. To engage the present generation educators should be innovative and use the latest mobile devices which students are familiar with iPad and smart phone.

Mobile Technologies and Authentic Learning:

Authentic learning is relatively new term that describes learning through applying knowledge in real life contexts and situation (Herrington & Herrington 2006). Klopfer et al., (2002) identified five educational properties of mobile devices that are portability, social interactivity, context sensitivity, connectivity and individuality. The features, such as voice, SMS, graphics, user-controlled operating systems, downloadable audio and video, browsers, cameras, geo-positioning, keyboards, big screen plug-ins, and headphones can be used in educational processes for listening, observing, imitating, questioning, reflecting, trying, estimating, predicting, and exploring ‘what if’ conditions. Mobile technologies, especially the iPad and smart phone have the capability to access wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) and worldwide interoperability for microwave access (WiMAX) networks, which will greatly encourage students to use mobile devices as a learning tool. Since present generations are attracted by the mobile technology, there is a need for an urgency to incorporate mobile technology in learning especially in teaching English language.

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Many research findings have yield positive results in relation to music, mobile technologies and education. First and foremost, music makes a vocabulary lesson memorable. Harris (2005) declared that when students enjoy the songs and it is easy for them to remember the words. It has been difficult to say which words that students know are passive and which are active. A word that has been active through constant use may slip back into the passive store if it is not used. A word that students have in their passive store may suddenly become active if the situation or the context provokes its use. In other words, the status of a vocabulary item does not seem to be a permanent state of affairs. In relation with that, Medina (1993) stated that the greatest amount of vocabularies was acquired when the stories were sung and illustrated. Thus, the words used in the lyrics remain in the active store as long as students listen to the particular song and since the aim of this work is to use students’ favorite songs; the period of time when pupils listen to the song for is long. The use of music in increasing students’ memory is further supported by Chan et al. (1998) who studied on improving verbal memory, Costa-Giomi (2004) who studied on self esteem and Schellenberg (2004 & 2006) who studied on the improvement of general intelligence.

Recent researches in the field of foreign language teaching have also pointed out that students’ motivation and interest are among the most important factors for the learning of a foreign language. Rosenberg (2010) stated that learning through mobile technologies provide intrinsic motivation and make the learning more fun and meaningful. Educators seek to create direct and engaging learning experiences that quickly bring students into contact with the material in an organic way which is authentic cultural context (Speh and Ahramjian 2009). There are several means to improve the teaching authenticity and to raise the interest and motivation of the students. Brewer (2005) stated that integration of music in classroom energize, create positive state of mind and enhance the learning environment. Songs contain natural language, often taken from conversation or the actual subject the song is about. This markedly contrasts with the often forced language seen in students’ textbook. Silvestri (2013) stated a wide variety of current and useful vocabulary can be acquired through popular songs. He further argued that when learning a new language, the most successful students will be those who interact with native speakers of the language. As this is not possible in second language classrooms, popular songs of that authentic culture directed at native-speaking marking are good place to start. With access to the Internet and its ability to play both audio and video, the iPad makes an incredibly genuine teaching tool incorporating music and songs.

The use of music is very popular many places, whether in the dentist’s surgery to relax us, or in shopping centres to encourage us to buy. Heart surgeons now use music to calm down operating teams during long and stressful operations. In one London hospital women can listen to music during childbirth to relax themselves (Rosova 2007). Thus songs and music also enable students to absorb content with a relaxation and reduced anxiety. According to Rosova (2007) music has proven to reduce the signs of nervousness of children and teenagers by 30%. The degree of receptivity to comprehensible input depends on the state of the affective filter. This refers to the emotional state of the learner at the time of exposure to the language input. In addition, according to Krashen’s (1985) affective filter hypothesis, students raise this imaginary protective filter when they are stressed, frustrated, embarrassed, anxious or bored. Music can develop relaxation with retrieving knowledge and reducing stress. Hence, motivation and interest in language learning can be increased.

It’s almost impossible to say exactly how many words there are in English and the huge number of vocabulary presents a challenge that would be impossible for most English language students, even for many native speakers. With the use of music and songs from latest mobile devices like an iPad in English classes, the process of learning vocabulary could be made effective with increased memory, authenticity and relaxation. The prior researchers have confirmed the relative advantages of using music in learning environment. However, using music in learning language is still an infant stage. It clearly shows that faculty members are unsure of about their use of mobile technology in educational context.

The present generation is using mobile technologies for storage, communication, games and to listen music. GSMArena team (2011) reported that 80.2% of generation Y declared that listening music is the most of important features in the mobile devices such as iPad and smart phones. Therefore this study is timely, to explore using music and technology in language learning to engage the generation Y. The study investigates various benefits of using music in mobile technologies like iPads and smart phones in learning English language vocabulary.

Frame Work of the Research:

Research frame work is based on Shih’s (2007) mobile learning model. This model describes the philosophy of social constructivism through collaborative discussion and peer interactions via mobile communication. Shin’s Mobile Learning Model designed to create instruction design for mobile learning. The model includes following cycles:

Literature Review:
Attention: The instructors create interest of the students
Relevance: Web search appropriate content for the students to achieve the goals of the learners.
Relevance/Confidence: Make the objective clear to the students to establish positive expectations for success.
Confidence: It refers to the reinforcement of what the students learn
Satisfaction: It refers to positive feelings of their learning experiences. It means that students receive recognition and evidence of success that support their intrinsic feelings of satisfaction.

Conclusion:
Music and song stimulate creativity and foster a positive attitude towards school and present generation are all having mobile devices where the students can download music and listen to them. Using music in language classes may only be considered by a few academics although many research finding in music and language have yield positive results. Probably because students don’t take music seriously, music may disturb neighboring classes, it contains poor vocabulary, too much slang and bad grammar, and many current songs express violence and sexism. Nevertheless, the benefits of using music in language teaching especially English vocabulary are inevitable. Therefore an action research should be done to explore the benefits and drawbacks of using music and iPads in vocabulary learning among the generation Y students.

REFERENCES


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