

## **Our Mobiles Shall Play the Materials for Us: Strategies for Improving Speaking and Listening Competencies Using Mobiles**

**Danial Bellarmen**, University Tamilnadu, India  
bellarmen@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

The presented paper bases its prominence on the ways of teaching how to speak and listen, using mobile phones as the medium. Mobile learning, or m-learning, is an attractive way to motivate students to acquire speaking and listening competencies. The teaching of English as a second language has witnessed a lot of changes over the years. Teaching English requires planning, monitoring and assessing students' development as speakers and listeners with effective tools and methods. M-learning is an authentic and easily accessible way that encourages students to learn unconsciously. There are activities such as narrating the video files, which students have already recorded, explaining the pictures they have etc. The recorder app in most mobile phones can also be used to record their own voice while indulging in a mock interview with other students. Individual short presentations of around one minute can also be made, which the mobile can record and can be watched afterwards to correct any mistakes made. Listening activities such as to trailers of movies, songs in English are also possible to develop interactive skills, speaking and listening. Listening to their mobiles really appeals to them and they are exposed to pronunciation in reality, without their realising. The paper is an experimental study done in classroom avenues. The paper also presents the issues come up during mobile learning.

### **Key words**

m-learning, teaching English, teaching speaking, teaching listening

### **Introduction**

English language teachers adopt various languages teaching methodologies e.g. Audio Lingual Method, Direct Method, Grammar-Translation Method, Community Language Learning, Natural Approach, Total Physical Responses, Communicative Approach etc. But what is more important for teachers is to decide what the most appropriate approach to teaching the language in that particular environment is and what activities are suitable for a given group of learners. The methods in an English classroom link the thoughts and the actions of the teacher to the students. As Larsen-Freeman (2000) points out, there are always 'thought-in-action links.' The author continues that as a teacher of

language, she has thoughts about the subject matter – what language is, what culture is – and about the students; who they are as learners and how they learn (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 37). Hence, it is important for a teacher to become aware of how thoughts guide the actions in the classroom. This awareness examines what should be done differently, so that learners can perform better in their communicative English.

Acquiring English language is undoubtedly a result of exposure and practice. Teaching and learning become a hard task unless we choose suitable material for practicing. A constant effort is required to produce and manipulate the materials in accordance with the interests of the learners. Otherwise, it becomes frustrating and demotivating for teachers and learners as well. An agenda for exploring and supporting classroom management is the need to learn and mobile learning unveils alternative ways of learning, which can be extremely helpful when educating students. Teaching and learning through m-learning optimises the learning experiences for students and teachers alike.

Mobile learning methods, such as CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), can be a very effective tool in the teaching-learning process. Though technology in the field of ELT is the most explored, there is always a search for strategies in order to satisfy learners' needs. Mobile learning paves the way for a unique bank of resources to be at the students fingertips and moves students towards language fluency in English. In today's world, millions of students use a mobile phone, which is a readily available tool to assist with improving language skills. Teachers today need to be technically equipped to be able to fulfill the demands of the learners. The students have high expectations and different experience and the teachers are expected to facilitate and support teaching to their satisfaction.

### **Teaching speaking and listening**

Speaking and listening skills are perceived as vital communication during interviews and the importance of these skills cannot be underestimated in the present globalised job market. Employers consider that speaking and listening abilities are the measure of knowing a language and fluency is meant as the ability to converse with others, which involves both the skills of speaking and listening.

The teaching of English as a second language in India has witnessed a lot of changes over the years. Teaching English requires planning, monitoring and assessing pupils' development as speakers and listeners with effective tools and methods. However, it has failed to develop the speaking and listening competencies of learners, both at secondary and tertiary levels. The reason for

this is due to the fact that from the lower classes onwards, we test the learners' language proficiency only through conducting written examinations. Despite the importance given to speaking and listening skills the teaching of such skills is the least developed.

Only very recently, the CBSE schools and the higher secondary schools of the state boards introduced practice in oral communication. Universities and autonomous institutions introduce books for developing the communicative competency of the learners. The recent boom in the globalised job market in India has led to issues and concerns for the pedagogy involving speaking and listening skills in colleges. To enhance the status of speaking, the teaching profession needs to address these issues along with acknowledging the classroom procedures which foster interaction.

### **Speaking and listening through MALL**

Mobile Assisted Language Learning enhances collaborative, cooperative and active learning. The learning optimises interaction among learners and critical components like speaking and listening can be effectively done by allowing mobiles to be used in classrooms. Pictures and photos are wonderful things to share among friends. Students can take photos of parts of their homes, colleges or the places they have visited and they can share the pictures with other friends for discussion. Different pictures of streets involving parts which students like or do not like can be considered for learning expressions of comparison and contrast. In pair work, two students can work on a short movie clip. One student plays the movie clip in mute mode and the other one plays the voice recorder in which the two students have already dubbed their voices. This activity particularly enables the students to pick up pronunciation and phrases of day to day life. Students can use the mobile phone camera to record role-plays and when it is played back, it is really funny for the students.

### **Conclusion**

Mobile learning is experiencing exponential growth as it is an effective platform for the teaching-learning process. Bill Gates said "Technology is just a tool. In terms of getting the kids working together and motivating them, the teacher is the most important thing." As the saying goes teachers need to successfully integrate mobiles and strategies in teaching and learning processes. Mobile learning has been proved to be a student-centered teaching. As mobiles are easily accessible, all students can be exposed to technical advantages in learning the language. Students who do not have exposure to sophisticated technology can have their access to mobile learning. However, teachers should be

careful that mobiles are used in classrooms with utmost safeguards. Students are generally very excited about using mobile phones and they should be kept under control.

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### **Contact**

Assist. Prof. (S.G) Danial Bellarmen, PhD.  
Department of English and Foreign Languages,  
SRM University  
Tamilnadu, India.  
[bellarmen@gmail.com](mailto:bellarmen@gmail.com)