

Mobile Phone as a Teaching Aid in the English Classroom

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the modern Android mobile phone as a teaching aid. Mobiles have been banned in many Institutions of higher education for various reasons. However, if used responsibly they can be effective aids in the teaching-learning process. An Android phone can be a text book, it can be your dictionary and note book too. In addition, you can watch videos on prescribed texts, learn pronunciation of difficult words and more importantly create a WhatsApp group of learners and teachers. In a nutshell, mobiles are effective classroom aids which can save paper, can be easily carried around, are user-friendly and serve multi purposes.

Key Words: Android phones, learning tools, portable, user-friendly

The advancement in modern technology has affected the functioning of the world; evidently the process of teaching-learning has also been impacted. An outstanding development in modern education is the increased availability of teaching aids which help to clarify, establish and correlate accuracy, concepts, interpretations and appreciations. They play a crucial role in increasing knowledge, rousing interest and even evoking worthy emotions and enriches the imagination of students. It is generally said that comprehension is greater when the input is in the form of visuals rather than only the voice of the teacher. S.K. Kochhar, in his book 'Methods and Techniques of Teaching' opines that audio-visual aids are motivators which make learning easy, interesting and joyful where the learner cannot but attend to the interesting procedure going on in front of him/her. As a result, students learn faster, retain longer, making learning meaningful and effective. In addition, the opportunity

to touch, feel, handle or operate, press a button gives an added appeal because it satisfies, though temporarily, the natural desire for mastery and ownership. According to Mckown and Roberts, "Audio-visual aids, wisely selected and intelligently used, arouse and develop intense and beneficial interest and so motivate the pupils' learning. And properly motivated learning means improved attitudes, permanency of impressions and rich experience and ultimately more wholesome living." A teaching-learning aid which is portable, user friendly, contributes to audio and visual learning and serves many more purposes is the mobile phone. This paper attempts to present the mobile phone as a teaching aid in the English classroom.

The purpose of learning a language is to enable students to communicate in that language. In order to communicate in a language, students need to be equipped with the four skills namely listening, reading, writing and speaking. However,

many language teachers have from ages expressed their inability in imparting some of these skills because of the lack of equipment. Therefore, the only listening that a student is exposed to is the teacher's voice, reading being restricted to the text, there too, in the event of there being a difficult word in the text and no dictionary available, the student is left in the dark unless s/he is taught to derive situational meaning. Speaking is non-existent, as there is neither scope nor opportunity for it, writing is largely rote-ridden, Pronunciation, is simply imitation of the teacher. The mobile phone can help improve this situation to a large extent. This paper makes no claim to practical usage of mobile in the classroom as the presenter is teaching in a First Grade College where mobile phones are banned in colleges by the University. Therefore, the paper presents personal experiences of how the mobile phone has aided the teacher/ presenter in preparation for classes, has used it to give home assignments to students where they will not be stopped from using the mobile and if applied in a classroom how they could largely benefit the student community.

The mobile phone is a very useful audio-visual aid. It can be very effectively used as a dictionary that not only gives meanings, both modern and archaic, references to where the word was first used, etc., sentences where the given words can be used; but also allows you to listen to the pronunciation of that word. Therefore, it performs three roles; that of a dictionary, a pronouncing dictionary and a reference book, too. Moreover, one need not go to the library and open the voluminous dictionary but can avail this knowledge at his/her fingertips in seconds.

So, in most cases, the mobile phone has taken the place of a library and functions more efficiently than a library would. E-resources can be easily downloaded or read through a mobile. The availability of an essay or a poem which is sometimes not possible in a real library can be easily traced through a mobile. In addition to the essay or poem, e-notes, summary, close reading; critical appreciation of that text, all these can be obtained in one small device. It saves the time that was earlier spent on going to libraries, searching for books, etc. The quick access the mobile allows makes it a real worthy aid to improve reading and listening. In addition, the videos that one can watch on one's mobile not only improve comprehension of the text, they also make possible the viewing of the text without the need for the cumbersome LCD, Computer, Screen and most importantly electricity. Working in a rural government College, well-equipped with modern teaching aids like the LCD, it has been the presenter's experience that when all equipment are set and everyone is ready to watch maybe, a movie on Arthur Miller's 'The Death of a Salesman', which is the prescribed text, there occurs a power cut. The mobile phone with a well charged battery allows the student to not only watch the movie at all times it also makes it possible to view it anywhere! Watching a movie based on the prescribed text can definitely enhance comprehension. Recently, while teaching Jonathan Swift's 'Gulliver's Travels' to students of I BA Optional English, the presenter after teaching 2 chapters asked them to watch the movie on YouTube that evening and come back with points on how the movie was different or similar to the prescribed text and surprisingly noticed that the otherwise quiet class had a lot to share!

Now, one may say that all this can be done on a computer too. However, the problem is computers are not owned by many students but mobiles are shockingly owned even by those students who claim to have no money to pay fees!

The modern Android phone with the Kindle App can replace the textbook and if one were to ponder a little on this and make it a reality, would save students from carrying heavy bags to college. The mobile phone with its social-media Apps improves connectivity. Students working on a project or studying for an examination can share views, ask questions, seek explanations from other students or teachers in the group, and send pictures, texts to a whole group at once. This is a modern method of learning where the student can be seated comfortably and relaxed in his/her home and still be academically involved in activities that could all be directed by the teacher from the comfort of his/her house.

Sadly, however, the mobile phone has not been awarded the place it rightly deserves in a classroom because its misuses quite outnumber its uses. In fact, it is termed as a trouble maker and a distractor taking students away from their primary goal of coming to college and that's why it is banned! It performs all the tasks that a computer does, yet unlike a computer which has a place of respectability in offices and staffrooms and computer labs,

mobiles don't enjoy that status primarily because they are so portable, easy to carry, can create, send news in a jiffy and create havoc in people's lives. Though this is the sad reality of the wonderful machine called the mobile phone, if used responsibly it can make students improve the speed of acquisition of knowledge, can unfold multiple folds of knowledge from sources far and wide with just the swipe of the finger! For a teacher, with minimum resources at hand like for instance an ill-equipped library with hardly any reference books or encyclopaedias, lack of other audio-visual aids, or maybe even lack of knowledge on a given topic-maybe a poem, an essay or a grammatical difficulty, the mobile is a real boon! Even for a teacher in a well-equipped college, the mobile is a handier and an easier to access aid than even computers. So, while the mobile cannot yet be taken to class for the purpose of teaching, it can be very effectively used for preparation for classes or for home assignments for students.

As a parting thought, the presenter wonders if mobiles were first made accessible to teachers and not the general public and introduced in classes in the place of text books, maybe they too would still be just innocent tools for language learning and teaching like the computer, because except for its portability, the computer too can perform most of the mischief that the mobile is guilty of!

References:

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