

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND MOBILE LEARNING

Boukhatem Nadera*

*Dr., The Preparatory School of Economics, Algeria boukhatem.nadera@yahoo.fr

Abstract

When many authors were referring to radio and television as 'new media' some years ago, little did they realize that a group of media, will later emerge that will sooner be termed 'newer'. The new development is about the adoption of mobile phones. These trends have emerged in many social contexts including participation in social networks, changes in the traditional communication habits and exhibition of unanticipated behaviours resulting from mobile communication. Algeria, like every other nation is not relenting her efforts in moving with time. When mobile phones first came into Algeria, many felt it will wipe off the telecommunications company which was statutorily on ground, today, the technology is making life easy for young and old.

This study is an addition to the relevant literatures on media research especially the accommodation of ubiquitous technologies on Algerian campuses. It will draw attention to the ways Algerian students use mobile phones and investigate attitudes about mobile phone usage in public settings. Although, it might look as if nothing new is been described that is not common in other settings, this seem to be the first time that the youth will take the lead in the adoption of an innovation in Algeria, leaving the trend unexplainable to the adults.

It started with a discussion on the features of phones and moves to present some literature relevant to mobile phone usage. The study found out that students make use of phones everywhere including restricted spaces like banking halls, cars and lecture rooms. Some confessed to causing accidents because they were engaging phones while driving. The study however recommends educational discussions on mobile phones to enhance students' positive and moderate usage of the technology.

Keywords: multicommutating; student; mobile phone

Introduction

In light of technological development, modern technological innovations have emerged such as the computer, computerized educational software, the Internet, e-mail, multimedia, interactive video, satellites, local networks and others with features of comprehensiveness and interaction, which resulted in the emergence of new concepts associated with educational practices, including : individual education, computer-aided education, computer-managed education, e-learning, e-library, e-school, electronic or virtual university, digital curriculum, distance learning, videoconferencing, computer conferences, electronic books and encyclopedias and others (Al-Ajlouni, 2009).

The scientific progress and technological development at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present century resulted in a significant impact on the educational process. Traditional education has become unable to meet the requirements of educational institutions in an era of accelerating knowledge and technological skills, especially in the areas of preparation and training of manpower and technical staff, and to keep pace with the modern global trends in the field of education and improving the outputs of the educational process and advancement to the ranks of developed countries (Champan, 2006). The entry of modern technology in the field of education, and its consideration as a way of thinking, working methodology and approach in problem solving as well as a systematic process that includes the outcome of interaction of a set of elements represented by appliances and machinery, thoughts and ideas, working methods, and management (Mackes, 2004 ; Goodison, 2001).

Exploring the wider context of mobile learning

Mobile learning as an educational activity makes sense only when the technology in use is fully mobile and

when the users of the technology are also mobile while they learn. These observations emphasise the *mobility* of learning and the significance of the term “mobile learning”. Traxler (2007) and other advocates of mobile learning define mobile learning as wireless and digital devices and technologies, generally produced for the public, used by a *learner* as he or she participates in higher education. Others define and conceptualise mobile learning by placing a strong emphasis on the *mobility* of learners and the *mobility* of learning, and the experiences of learners as they learn by means of *mobile* devices.

Traxler (2007) writes: “so, mobile learning is not about ‘mobile’ or about ‘learning’ as previously understood, but part of a new mobile conception of society”. Research and reflections on mobile learning should stimulate multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking and methods in education.

Impacts of the Educational Uses of the mobile

Means of communication have provided great potential in the field of learning and teaching. The use of the mobile in education led to the development of the educational process and made changes in teaching methods, and the respective roles of the teacher and the learner, through methods of interactive presentation and attractive and influential teaching methods, employing colors, images, sounds and video clips, which work to raise the motivation more than traditional methods. The mobile has also contributed to enrich the students with the necessary information in their field of specialization which increases the learning process and reduces the time required to learn. It also increases the learners’ effectiveness in learning (Al-Shirawi, 2006; Al-Ajlouni, Al-Abadi, and Al-Majali, 2006; Al-Aayachi and Gayad, 2012).

Al-Ajlouni (2004) points out that we need to renew education to keep pace with the information age, and therefore it became necessary to use modern technology-based on information technology with the associated computers, and networks of information transfer both local and international to move from the state of rigid to flexible education and transform the role of the learner from mere reception to research and investigation using advanced information technology. This is to enhance the learner’s ability to renovation, innovation, creativity, self-reliance, and innovative thinking.

Providing a mobile learning environment to language educators may help them become more comfortable with using their own devices.

As more learners are exposed to and make use of mobile learning environments, they will have richer learning opportunities. This is especially true for TESOL students in the field of language education. As they become more comfortable with using mobile learning devices and change their receptivity to new technology, they can see more value in adopting new technology in their classes. If they change their beliefs about the use of new technology, they should be more likely to use mobile learning devices for pedagogical purposes in their future classes.

Although many educators and schools have worked hard to make mobile learning available to all students, the usage of mobile technologies for language learning should be carefully implemented and should take student perceptions into consideration. In other words, educators should embrace students’ perceptions and recognize them as essential when designing effective mobile learning environments. This can potentially empower students by engaging them in personalized learning experiences with mobile technologies. If future teachers have positive experiences using mobile technologies while they are students, they will be more likely to use those mobile technologies when they become classroom teachers.

Using educational and motivational mobile (Apple iPhones, Android phones, iPads, and tablets) applications increases student engagement and interest in literacy.

As stated in *Transforming Education Through Technology, Putting the iPad to*

Work in Elementary Classrooms, “More than the use of the technology to simply assess student’s skills through computerized assessments, some of the most interesting applications are those that allow for students creativity and critical thinking” (Peter Levy, July 11, 2011). By combining student interest in both, engagement and interest in literacy blossomed. The students demonstrated their motivation to succeed at this activity through video documentation, weekly iPad chats, on-going observation, and classroom teacher feedback. Video documentation captured positive interaction with students who were working as partners during this time.

Recently, adding Internet access to mobile devices has extended users’ communication ability from simply telephoning to emailing, creating and sharing multimedia messages, accessing social media like Facebook, and so forth. When applied to learning activities, these mobile communication services can increase students’ extrinsic motivation to participate in learning, which may lead to positive learning outcomes (Rau,

Gao, & Wu, 2006).

How Does Learning Change?

Mobile technology in a learning environment does not change the essential aspects of how people learn.

Learning does not occur passively and research shows that there is greater learning when students engage in active learning (as cited in McKinney, 2011; Meyers & Jones, 1993). Active learning involves students in talking and listening, reading, writing, and reflection all possible through the use of a mobile device. These devices are small, already owned by most university students and have more capabilities than clickers and easy to use on a desk in a classroom or outside the classroom. But let's back up a second, we know that these devices are owned by many if not most of our university students but as educators, we need to realize they are becoming owned by learners of all ages. Parents are seeing these devices as ways to educate their children. We are becoming a world of *Free Agent Learners* (Speak Up 2010, p.1) "who seek out online learning resources on their own, follow a passion for a topic and fully explore it on the web, self-remediate when necessary, and are tapping into the power of educational games inside and outside of school" (Speak Up 2010, 201, p. 1).

Concerns in Developing Mobile Learning?

We are still in the early days of mobile learning and its application. Students can play a major role through the development of apps that become institutional resources and part of the institution's infrastructure. Most of the time, students are pioneers in forcing us as educators to change. However, once the student work becomes part of the university infrastructure, the apps may be outsourced just like the university website and other centralized IT work of the university.

Mobile devices increase the opportunity for student/faculty interaction. Text messages, Skype calls and constant email can become a 24/7 event for the faculty member. The expectations of a mobile-based learning will have to be negotiated such that both faculty and student are not invading each other's social and private spaces and time.

Cell phone use, laptop use, social networks in the classroom will also have to be negotiated. "Student empowerment is a faculty member's threat." (Mobile Learning, 2010, p. 5).

While there is often resistance to mobile technologies from faculty, students are not necessarily ready to move forward either. Mobile technology may be in the hands of students but it is primarily used to listen to music.

Finally, research by Dr. Sherry Turkle (2011) asks the following question: Why do we expect more from our technology than we do from people who are using the technology. Those who love the technology and are engaged with the technology and who study the technology must never forget that there is a human side to technology. Never forget that people are at the base of society and are who will maintain the humanity in how we teach, treat each other and live together as productive citizens of a global society.

Conclusion

Technology is playing an increasingly large role in language learning, with much recent research focusing on mobile phones. Until very recently, mobile phones were very limited in the types and amounts of learning material that could be presented to the language learner. But the new smartphones that are available today allow for higher quality materials due to larger multi-touch screens, faster processors, more memory, and faster Internet bandwidth connections. However, fragmented platforms and high costs of smartphones complicate the decision of how to present language learning content to students, especially in a developing country such as Algeria.

Therefore, the objectives of this exploratory study were to determine mobile ownership and usage among Algerian university students. The mobile phone ownership is evenly split between owning feature phones and smartphones.

The findings of this study suggest that mobile technologies have the potential to provide new learning experiences. In these experiences, students can engage more frequently in learning activities outside of class, providing them with more learning opportunities in their community of practice. Studies indicates that the use of mobile technologies in the classes opens up new avenues for interaction and learning. The participants became more willing to adopt new technologies into their own lives, which revolve around teaching English as a profession.

Finally, although results indicate that subjects' use of mobile devices are largely restricted to communicative purposes, the use of English as a foreign language through the phone is also occurring.

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