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Teacher Opinions on Usage of Mobile Learning in Pre-School Foreign Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Presently, acquiring education and scientific knowledge by using technological means has become easier. Individuals use their mobile devices for exchange of information, entertainment and educational purposes. They meet several needs by mobile devices which have become an indispensable element of their lives. Mobile devices also enable pre-school pupils to learn a foreign language more efficiently regardless of time and space as they are portable. Teachers, on the other hand, convey subjects of education and teaching to their students by using their mobile devices. In brief, mobile learning is one of the significant components of education. This research aims to establish the efficiency and influence of mobile learning in respect of foreign language learning. It involves a case study based on a qualitative research design. In this study where teachers take part as participants, the contribution of mobile learning process to the foreign language development of pupils in the pre-school period will be addressed. The study will underline the role and influence of mobile learning on language development, especially on foreign language education.

Keywords: mobile learning, perception levels for mobile learning, foreign language learning, mobile technologies

INTRODUCTION

Computer and internet usage obligation in rapidly developing technology has gained a new dimension after the emergence of mobile technologies which have claimed indispensable place in our lives. This indispensability revealed our will to keep these devices “everywhere” and “every time” with us (Altun & Ateş, 2007). These technologies which we can carry at any time and any moment are called “mobile technologies” and offer us a variety of opportunities. Trifonova and Ronchetti (2003) defined mobile learning as the learning which is made through mobile devices that we can carry in our daily lives which include computing and communication features. According to Quinn (2000) mobile learning is e-learning activity through mobile devices.

Introduction of mobile technologies raises our living standards and with the opportunities they offer we gain new viewpoints in many aspects of our lives. One of these viewpoints is teaching and learning of foreign languages. Foreign language is a process which can be taught at any level and age and which deserves attention. Today language learning age begins at pre-school period. The child who learns a foreign language at early ages can

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State of the literature

- Mobile Technologies fosters learning foreign language in pre-school.
- Learner autonomy is fostered by the use of e-devices.
- Teachers are confident integrating new teaching methods with high technology in the classroom.

Contribution of this paper to the literature

- Learning a foreign language through technology gets, keeps and supports students both the attention and the motivation of both the teachers and the students in pre-school education.
- Learning and assessment based on the classroom, lecture hall and other “formal” learning environments, delivered in traditional ways (chalk&talk) on its own, is outdated and very limited in scope for acquisition of knowledge and skills.
- Children’s schooling in particular and Life-long learning in general in language acquisition gets deeper and more meaningful with the help of mobile learning in addressing of the complex, realistic problem solving activities.

compare the cultural values of his/her own country with those of foreign countries when he/she grows older and become a universal person with strong communication skills and tolerance. In brief, language education offered at early ages plays essential role in the individual, cultural and social development of the child (Kara, 1999).

Krashen (1973) argues that language development of children began at the age of 2 and continued until adolescence. If a child learns a foreign language at the age of two, he/she can use that language like the native language (İlter & Er 2007). Anşın (2006) states that foreign language taught at early ages increases the understanding skills in one’s native language and develops mental agility. For this reason foreign language teaching has positive effects on the personal development and world view of the child.

Akdoğan (2004) claimed that brain development of children is between the ages of 2 and 6. İlter and Er argued that linguistic conscience at these ages is highly intense. If the foreign language taught in natural environments is prepared compatible with the development and psychology of the child, he/she can learn the language easily.

Od (2013) argues that the content of cartoons have an effective role in the foreign language learning of children at early ages as their content attracts the attention of children and they run for short periods (2013) According to İlter and Er (2007) “the child must come across a foreign language in a natural environment at nursery class. Language education must be made at pre-school period with natural methods such as games, songs, rigmaroles parallel to information technologies. In particular foreign language teaching helps the development of these skills which form the foundations of language development such as listening, imitating, and conceptualizing.” Chun, Smith & Kern (2016) similarly asserts how technological media influence contexts and forms of expression and communication.

In this paper, the impact of mobile learning which is a rapidly developing element of information technologies on pre-school foreign language teaching will be examined. It will add valuable knowledge to literature, will also provide a basis and a background for future research and help to open minds, expand the vast possibilities of digital age in educational concerns.

The purpose of this study is to determine the teacher opinions as regards usage of mobile learning in pre-school foreign language learning. In this context;

1. What are the teacher opinions about the nature of mobile learning?
2. What are the teacher opinions about employability of mobile learning in foreign language learning?
3. What are the teacher opinions about the reasons for which mobile learning can be used in foreign language education?
4. What are the teacher opinions about the impact of mobile learning on language skills of students?

Table 1. Personal characteristics of the research group

	Theme	N
Gender	Female	16
	Male	4
Age	30-35 ages	12
	36-40 ages	5
	40-45 ages	3
Academic title	Associate professor	1
	Graduate degree	7
	Undergraduate degree	12

5. What are the teacher opinions about the differences between traditional and foreign language education and mobile learning?
6. What are the teacher opinions about how students benefit from mobile learning?

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research pattern

This study consists of a case study based on qualitative research pattern. Case study is a type of research with which qualitatively, quantitatively and strategically collected data are analysed with content analysis method which is known as a type of program evaluation (Patton, 2002). Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008) defined case study as a method which is based on technical methods, justified with strong motives and carried with care.

Study group

This study is performed with the participation of 20 teachers who are being educated at Pre-school department of Near East University in spring semester of 2015-2016 academic year. Purposive sampling and convenience sampling was used as sampling method. Distribution of personal characteristics of the research group is given in [Table 1](#).

Collection techniques and analysis of data

An interview form consisting of 4 open ended questions developed by the researchers was used as data collection tool in this study. In the interview form which was prepared according to expert opinions, questions were included which would presumably ensure that teacher opinions on using mobile learning in foreign language teaching can be determined. The questions in the interview form are the nature and necessity of mobile learning, how they affect language skills, their differences from traditional foreign language teaching and how they can be used by students. The previously prepared questions were asked in the form of a conversation during interview. The participants were coded as K1-K or K4-E according to their numbers and genders which was use throughout the study.

FINDING AND INTERPRETATION

Findings of the study are interpreted under six titles, namely the nature and necessity of mobile learning, how it affects language skills, their differences with traditional foreign language education and how they will be used by students.

When the data in [Table 2](#) are examined, it can be seen that several definitions were made as to the nature of mobile learning. when teacher opinions are examined, it is seen that 10 think that it is education independent from location, 8 think that it is education with phone/tablet/laptop computer, 7 think that it is education independent from time, 5 think that it is education based on education-communication technologies, 1 think that it is standard education and 1 think that it is distant education. One of the interviewees, K1-K interpreted mobile

Table 2. Teacher opinions about the nature of mobile learning

Theme	N
Education independent from location	10
Education with phone / tablet / laptop computer	8
Education independent from time	7
Education based on education-communication technologies (general)	5
Standard education	1
Distant education	1

Table 3. Teacher Opinions about the Employability of Mobile Learning in Foreign Language Teaching

Theme	N
Yes, it can be employed	19
No, it cannot be employed	1

Table 4. Teacher opinions about the reasons for which mobile learning can be used in foreign language education

Theme	N
Supporting audio-visual education	10
Ease of access to information	4
Improving speaking skills	3
Allowing for reinforcement	2
Fun education	2
Improving speaking skills	3

learning as “ensuring that people receive education using communication technologies. It is a system which is not restricted with time and location” whereas K6-E commented: “I think that mobile learning is a type of learning through tablet, phone, laptop etc.” According to K5-K, mobile learning is “understood as a type of teaching where standard education is applied to each person without limitation of location, time and place which is performed with mobile devices” whereas K16-K commented that “ensuring education every time and everywhere or from a distance through devices” which emphasised the difference between two approaches.

According to **Table 3**, when employability of mobile learning in foreign language teaching is examined, 19 interviewees approved and 1 interviewee disapproved the provision. K5-K said that mobile learning “could be used in a very efficient manner in foreign language education” whereas K3-K believed that mobile learning “had no use in practicing language”.

According to **Table 4**, when the opinions about the reasons for which mobile learning can be used in foreign language education are examined, it is seen that 10 believed that it supported audio-visual education, 4 believed that it provides ease of access to information, 3 thought that it improved speaking skills, 2 said that it allowed for reinforcement and 2 told that it was fun education. K8-K; “mobile learning can be used in foreign language as it can be beneficial both in audio and in visual manner”, K15-K “mobile learning can be used in foreign language education as it is easy to reach information everywhere when it is needed”. K6-E “it is very important. Visual repetitions using tablet etc. shortens the span of learning. Especially voice repetitions are important for pronunciation in foreign language. Digital games, puzzles, songs are fun for children and prevent them from getting bored”. K16-K “Because it is a modern model of learning and it supports traditional education; it also supports foreign language”.

In **Table 5** which consists of teacher opinions about the impact of mobile learning on language skills of students, it is seen that 14 are speaking and listening, 3 are preparation for reading and writing, 2 is vocabulary and

Table 5. Teacher opinions about the impact of mobile learning on language skills of students

Theme	N
Speaking and listening	14
Preparation for reading and writing	3
Vocabulary	2
Grammatical implications	1

Table 6. Teacher opinions about the differences between traditional and foreign language education and mobile learning

Theme	N
Teachers who think that mobile learning has positive aspects and criticize traditional approach	11
Teachers who think that traditional learning has positive aspects and mobile learning	7
Teachers who support both mobile learning and traditional teaching	2

1 is grammatical implications. According to K5-K mobile learning is *“a very effective system in accurate pronunciation and fluent speaking”*. K17-K told on the same theme that *“mobile learning has positive impact on language skills of children as it provides accurate pronunciation and knowledge of foreign language acquired by listening”*. K9-K provided her opinions on mobile learning as *“through mobile learning the person can hear and watch what he/she wants again and again and learn it better”*. K13-K stated that *“it helped support the reading, writing, arithmetic and language learning skills of students”*.

According to **Table 6**, teacher opinions on the differences between traditional and foreign language education and mobile learning, 11 said that mobile learning has positive aspects and criticized traditional approach, 7 said that traditional learning has positive aspects and criticized mobile learning, and 2 supported both mobile learning and traditional learning.

Below are the opinions of interviewees: K15-K *“all traditional education methods are limited with one teacher and one location; as a result they can be boring or if the teacher and the class is not internalized by the student he/she can be distanced from the lecture. In mobile applications, audio and visual stimuli are multiple which can be especially attractive for pre-school student groups”*. K1-K *“I think that traditional foreign language education and mobile-supported education should be conducted simultaneously. Traditional methods can be boring but they have educative aspects, too. On the other hand mobile learning improves creativity.”* and K3-K *“traditional education is much more teaching and provides more room for practice and application”*.

When the teacher opinions about how students benefit from mobile learning are examined, it can be seen that 17 said that mobile learning has positive impact on the child, 1 said that mobile learning has negative impact on the child, and 2 said that mobile learning has both positive and negative impact on the child. The interviewee K17-K gave her opinions on positive impact of mobile learning as follows: *“mobile devices support students from several aspects as they have multiple applications. They can be more interesting as they teach colours, shapes and numbers with games and children can learn to pronounce and use the language accurately as they hear the accurate pronunciation. The interviewee K3-K commented on the negative impacts of mobile learning as “games, videos and songs can attract the attention of pre-school students but I believe that mobile learning is beneficial”. K2-K who thinks that mobile learning is both beneficial and harmful explained that “when used alone, mobile learning can develop technology addiction in children. At the same time, it can have negative effects such as decrease of interpersonal relations and socialization. Children at young age can be attracted by songs and videos but at this age foreign language can be limited with vocabulary. Mobile learning can be more beneficial for children who can read”*.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, the teacher opinions on use of mobile learning in pre-school foreign language learning were examined which constitutes the qualitative data in this study (Dencin & Lincoln, 2003). As a result of the research

obtained through content analysis, six sub-purposes were determined in line with the questions in interview form. First, the teachers were asked to provide their opinions on the definition of mobile learning. It was seen that the definitions made by teachers were education independent from location, education with phone / tablet / laptop computer, education independent from time, education based on education-communication technologies (general), standard education and distant education. As can be understood from definitions made by teachers, mobile learning is defined as a way of learning which eliminates time and place restrictions. Teachers who know the importance of mobile learning can receive parent education. Another point emphasized in the research was the employability of mobile learning in foreign language teaching. The expressions of teachers were grouped as “yes, it can be employed” and “no, it cannot be employed”. The interviewee who said “no” stated that mobile learning proved insufficient in practice in foreign language learning. However, learning supported by technology encourage the use of cognitive tools while learning (Herrington & Kevin, 2007).

Another theme questioned in the research was the reasons for which mobile learning can be used in foreign language education. Teachers listed their opinions as supporting audio-visual education, ease of access to information, improving speaking skills, allowing for reinforcement and fun education. Especially, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) fosters learning the multiple voices. (Foot, 2001) They first stated that mobile learning was employed in both audio and visual manner. In addition, they stated that with mobile learning the student could reach information instantly whenever they want. It was also emphasised that visual and audio repetitions in mobile learning during foreign language learning shortened the timespan of learning and especially voice repetitions were important for correct pronunciation of foreign language. In addition, digital games, puzzles and songs in technological devices used for mobile learning are fun for children and prevent them from getting bored easily. It can be claimed that technical support would be beneficial for teachers who stated in detail the reasons for which mobile learning should be used.

In the research, the impact of mobile learning on language skills of students was stressed. The opinions explained by teachers are listed as speaking and listening, preparation for reading and writing, vocabulary and grammatical implications. In this context, it was seen that interviewees argued that mobile usage had positive impact on language skills of students and that learning was reinforced and became permanent as the language was practiced. Other than speaking and listening skills, awareness with interest can be created in pre-school students who take mobile learning as base for making contribution to preparation for reading and written and vocabulary (Bennet, Maton & Kervin, 2008).

Another topic handled in the study was the differences between traditional and foreign language education and mobile learning. Teachers who think that mobile learning has positive aspects and criticize traditional approach, teachers who think that traditional learning has positive aspects and mobile learning and teachers who support both mobile learning and traditional teaching were the three groups that emerged. First of all, teachers who were pro-mobile learning claimed that mobile learning provided learning by living outside the student and teacher relationship, that it provided time, fun and freedom, that it was free learning by seeing, hearing and practicing, that it was short and fast learning, that it allowed for interactive learning, that it developed language without time and place restrictions and that it was attractive and memorable education. Learning interaction is shaped by both the technology and by providing authentic materials (Astra, Nasbey & Nugraha, 2015; Kinshuk, Graf & Yang, 2009).

One of the problems questioned within the study was the teachers who claimed that traditional learning had positive impacts and criticized mobile learning. In this approach, the concepts which teachers emphasised were that instructive, practical and applied education and blackboard education. However, on its own, it is outdated and very limited in scope for acquisition of knowledge and skills (Kolopfer, 2008).

In addition to the foregoing, some teachers provided views that supported both mobile learning and traditional teaching. Accordingly, traditional education has some didactic aspects as mutual dialogue, learning by touching, active learning and earning restricted in certain hours. In addition, they claimed that mobile learning was easily accessible education intertwined with technology which improved creativity. It is important to discover and eliminate the shortcomings of traditional and mobile learning.

The last problem examined in the study was how students could benefit from mobile learning. Teachers who provided their opinions in the research stated that mobile learning had positive impact, negative impact and both beneficial and harmful impact on the child. Teachers who claimed that mobile learning had positive impact argued that mobile learning improved creativity and language skills and brought practice. On the other hand, teachers who thought that mobile learning had negative impact stated that it developed technology dependence, and decreased reading habits and socialization. Awareness must be raised among especially pre-school teachers on eliminating the negative impacts as learning a foreign language is more challenging after the age of six. (Young & Bush, 2004)

With mobile learning students can improve speaking and listening skills with audio and visual materials in foreign language teaching. With the speed of technology, unlimited amount of information can be reached in a short time and instantly. Through a variety of network connection techniques, the devices can also access abundant network resources. (Zeng & Luyegu, 2012) In addition, mobile learning approach which allows for students to receive an education independent from time and place so that they can be more efficient and effective during foreign language learning can be a complementary element for traditional learning approach. "Teaching to pass tests does not maximise your learner's ability and potential." (Gravells, 2011) Pedagogical functionality should include content delivery, task collaboration and planning, searching for information and assessment and accessing virtual environments such as discussion boards. (Kaliisa & Picard, 2017)

Measures must be taken to identify the hesitations of people who are against adopting and using innovation, in other words, mobile technology devices, instead of old methods, to eliminate obstacles and minimize negative results. In this context, awareness-raising courses must be given to teachers.

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