Review of Pros and Cons of Mobile Assisted Language Learning in Indian Education during Pandemic

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Abstract

COVID – 19 pandemic has altered the way we live. This pandemic has been a great teacher to almost each and every human being on this earth. Respect towards everything and everyone has tremendously increased. One of the major impacts is on the education sector. Smart phones become a necessity for all. Learning to do things differently is always fascinating however; this requires the perfect understanding of these technologies. As in the current time academicians were almost thrown to adopt the technology in their classes irrespective of the fact that were they familiar with these techniques or not.

Change is the ultimate thing in this world and one should always be ready to mould him/herself according to the changes. However, there are people who require a time to come out of their usual box. MALL and CALL are not the new terminologies in Indian education system. They were prevalent even before the pandemic struck Indian continent. The immediate emergency made it trivial and tough. We had no choice but to adopt what was required and this is where we lacked in understanding the entire structure of MALL.

This study will aim at analyzing the Pros and Cons of Mobile Assisted learning during Pandemic. Facts and Figures are analyzed from different newspaper researches on the effectiveness, challenges, pros and cons of using MALL in education system in India specifically during this global pandemic COVID -19.

Keywords: Education during COVID-19 in India, MALL and CALL

Introduction

MALL or Mobile Assisted Language Learning happens to be subcategory of both Computer Assisted Language Learning and Mobile Learning (also known as M-Learning). Communication in both these modes is possible in two way process. One is with mobile phones and the other is with devices like tablets, iPods, smart phones, palmtop and digital assistant. These technologies enhance the learning power of not just the students but teachers as well. The attractive and innovative teaching –learning modules are the key features of technologically driven education system these days.

Crompton in 2013 observed mobile assisted learning as ''learning across multiple contexts, through social and content interactions, using personal electronic devices''. This makes mobile assisted language learning more appropriate and pivotal in the field of learning languages. The learner friendly features attract and facilitate learning to be more effective. The popularity of the technology is highly dependent on the compatibility and accessibility of the small device. In developing country like India which is vast too this becomes the provider of wider and cheaper opportunities in language pedagogies.

If we compare the traditional techniques like SLL and FLL, Mobile Assisted Language learning is more advantageous in terms of freedom of place, time, choice and priorities in learning. This fact is even true that this is not completely self sufficient. It does require strengthening of infrastructure, spread of awareness about the technology, a rise in access to internet connectivity and its inclusive widespread.

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MALL in Post COVID -19 Era in India

There is no doubt about the opening of new avenue of M-Learning in the field of education in last two decades. Progress of any society is stagnant without technology and language. COVID-19 pandemic has proven itself to be the disruption in our normal life which included closure of physical working spaces and colleges/schools. Approximately 240 million children from schools in India were in threat of loss of learning due to the closure of schools (lockdown is the term of the hour). Reimagining and remodelling of the classroom teaching and learning was necessary to mitigate the impact of this global pandemic.

During pandemic government initiatives like Digital India have created and extraordinarily conducive environment to embrace the digital education in the country. The recent launching of PM e-Vidya is able to unify all platforms related to online education by MHRD. SWAYAM is an online MOOC catering variety of courses, DIKSHA promotes one nation one digital platform, IITPAL this a platform dedicated to aspirants preparing for exams, CBSCE Shiksha Vani is a podcast for school children and AIR teaches through community radio. These were the platforms started by MHRD Government of India to cater all the needs of our students online without any disturbance (especially during the pandemic).

Pros and Cons of MALL in Indian Education during Pandemic

With ongoing COVID 19 pandemic world has change and accepted the new normal too. As far as Education sector is concerned it has largely moved online. This is without any doubt is need of the hour to keep the students active with learning. Learning is a continuous process and it should never stop no matter what the situation is and here moving it online is the best possible solution. Classes are conducted through Whatsapp, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and many more online platforms. These are the new norms for teachers, students and parents too. However, like everything in this world has two sides online education too has it. Here we are going to discuss about some case studies of students across the country. To get an over view of the challenges they have faced in the current scenario.

A class XII student from Coimbatore was interviewed on her experience where she shares she has been using Whatsapp for submitting assignments, asking doubts and even talking to friends. She concluded the entire conversation by saying this is boring after certain extent. The excessive screen time is major concern of many parents across the county but this is inevitable now. There are parents who are themselves uncomfortable with the technology used for teaching learning. This results in children cribbing about the same and it is difficult to motivate them towards online learning.

Next is the connectivity issue. This has been the universal issue and it does tells us a lot about ''Digital Dive' in our country. Students coming from nuclear families and specifically where the parents are working, they might have to miss their working time to manage their kid's classes. The pressure is equally distributed among parents and teachers. Teachers on the other hand are facing different challenges. Every teacher has his/her own style, method and approache of teaching. While all this the teacher has to build a good rapport with the students as well. This

could be done by paying attention to the students and their body language. With these unprecedented times the teacher is only able to see the students on screen with loads of internal and external disturbances. Building a rapport seems to be next to impossible task for teachers.

Adjusting to new routines is the necessity these days. Teachers and students have to adjust equally. Classes had to be divided into small groups, teaching time reduced from nine-to-five schedule. Conducting online exams without letting students cheat. The disruption in the academic calendar as the large scale exams had to be postponed and later cancelled. Situation in the small villages is worst as education seems beyond the reach because of the lockdown.

According to a news report in The Hindu, Think Zone an Odisha startup is using SMS (Short Message Services) and IVR (Interactive Voice Response) and radio to reach out to those household without internet connectivity. They have collaboration with local radio channel in order to broadcast modules based on activities for students aged between 3 to 10 years. These activities are available in three languages Hindi, English and Odia. Surprisingly the response is overwhelming too as their content is being used by the neighbouring states as well.

Conclusion

This is not just about the schools being closed this is much more than that. We as a country are not equipped and prepared for the current situation. These hard times can be avoided only if more entities whether in Public or Private pitch into long term and short term futures of the little children in this Digital Divide we are experiencing today. We can clearly see the future of online learning is here to stay just as all the traditional methods are converted into online resources. Online learning is surely going to be acceptable alternative in the situations with or without Pandemic. Investing in online learning seems to be beneficial for all the coming generations. A collective effort of government and public sector is required to make this resource possible for each and every household in India.

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