

Management Techniques for ESL Learners Through Apps

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Abstract- Language is the medium of communicating one's feelings, emotions, thoughts and ideas. In a language, communication can be done effectively through the four basic skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing (LSRW). Here, the productive skills such as Speaking and Writing are more essential for a man to communicate effectively, whereas receptive skills such as Listening and Reading are the background skills which are useful for a learner to be competent in productive skills. One should affirm himself in all these four skills, but for an ESL Learner in the country like India needs speaking skills as the most required skill for better communication. In the present scenario, India has grown much in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Application Software (Apps) is the milestone in the ICT field. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) becomes smarter and also there are plenty of APPS, provided by various companies and organizations to improve English speaking skill. This paper will analyze the usage of an app in enhancing the competence of the ESL learners' speaking skill.

Keywords: -- communication, receptive skills, productive skills, MALL, Application Software.

I. INTRODUCTION

English is the widely spread and global language in the universe. English language plays a vital role in almost all the fields throughout the world. "In every sphere of life like social, political, academic, cultural and economic life English has significant values" (15) says N.Prema in her work Teaching of English. In Indian context, English language becomes a part in the communication of students, politicians, employees and for many people all over the country in all professions. If one should be competent in a language, he/she should be trained in all the four basic Communicative skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Speaking a language is highly important that it is the only way to show that he/she is well-trained. Speaking will not be attained immediately without the other skills.

In this digital era, Information Technology plays a vital role in developing technological world which makes impossible things into possible. The growth of Information Technology is extremely high in almost all the fields. Even, education system has undergone a great change due to introduction of smart classes, e-learning and so on, which are all the applications of Information Technology in the field of education. The introduction of Mobile phones made everyone to feel that earth is too small, as everyone can know or gain information through this technology. Application softwares (Apps) are the milestones in education as they have made the learning or teaching, easier outside the classroom. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) can be used as a tool to make the learner to enhance their competence level in

communicative skills especially in speaking skills. This paper will analyze some mobile Apps to show the learners, its purpose and process in enhancing the competence in speaking skill of the ESL learners.

COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

Communication is an important factor of conveying one's feeling, thoughts, ideas and emotion in an easy way of understanding. The main purpose of a language, as a medium, is to communicate and this was well-explained by N.Krishnaswamy and Lalitha Kirshnaswamy in their Methods of Teaching English as "Learning a language means learning the means by which a thought, an idea, an emotion, an experience, a fact or a piece of knowledge is conveyed or communicated. In that sense, language is a medium or a tool and the mastery of a tool comes with practice in the use of it" (57)

There are four communicative skills separated under two categories namely – Receptive skills and Productive skills.

RECEPTIVE SKILLS

The receptive skills in the process of communication in a language are Listening and Reading. To achieve the competence in speaking skill, one has to have competence in listening skill. Thus, if one has to write in English effectively, he/she has to be competent in Reading skill. This was stated by N.Krishnaswamy and Lalitha Krishnaswamy as "without listening, no speaking is possible; so in order to speak, one has to listen. Similarly, without reading, no writing is

possible; so one has to read in order to write” (57). In almost every process, output can be achieved when an input is perfectly given. So, receptive skills are the way to make a person competent in productive skills.

PRODUCTIVE SKILLS

Productive skills are the other two communicative skills – Speaking and Writing. These skills are much useful in the process of communication, as a person can share his/her feelings, emotions and so on to a receiver or a reader or a peer group by means of speaking or writing. As quoted by N.Prema, “Speaking and writing the other hand are Active skills. Here the person, being at the transmitting and of the channel has to take the initiative. These two are called Productive skills” (28), these skills are active, as they make a person to communicate with others.

NEED OF ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL FOR ESL LEARNERS

Speaking skill is the most important and required skill for everyone who know that particular language. A person, who knows a language, can be called as the speaker of that language. He/she may not be called as listener or a reader or a writer of that language. In India, there are lots of languages in which many of them don't have a written form in it. This shows that there is not at all the possibility of reading takes place. Thus, Speaking skill plays a major and dominant role in the process of communication.

ESL learners, who know English as only a second language, in a country like India, find it difficult to speak fluently in English. As English is the global language and speaking is the essential skill in the process of English communication, learners have to face many problems while they get into a job in abroad or even in other state of our country, where they can communicate only in English. Therefore, the effective way of teaching English is to make them speak fluently and effectively in English.

APPS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Once, when someone asks a child, “What stands for the letter ‘A’?”, then the child may answer ‘A’ for ‘Apple’. But now, ‘a’ stands for Android, Applications, the words may go on. Thus, our world has grown much in the field of technology that everyone in this world uses it for various purposes. Mobile technology has been grown much rapidly. The usage of mobile applications increases daily, as it stands useful in several ways such as education, health, environment, transportation and so on.

‘App’ is the abbreviation of the term “application software”. As mentioned by Qiaochu Liu and Xuan He in their Using Mobile Apps to Facilitate English Learning for College Students in China mention, “At the beginning, mobile Apps were developed for general productivity and information retrieval; such as weather foremost, e-mail, calendar, alarm clock and so on. However, public demand and the availability of developer tools drove rapid’s expansion into other categories, such as education, entertainment and tools.” (10). Thus, mobile Apps were introduced into the education system and make the learners to learn a language outside their classroom learning. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has been much developed and used in the field of education in improving students communicative skills. Hea-Suk Kim in her work Emerging Mobile Apps to Improve English Listening Skills states, “In terms of the behaviourist and teacher-centered approaches, vocabulary and grammar tutorial programs have proven to be well suited for the mobile environment. Furthermore, constructive, collaborative learner-centered approaches have inspired a range of MALL applications that include vocabulary learning, speaking, and reading as well collaborative learner-learner instructions” (12). Thus, the following Mobile app will surely help the ESL learners to enhance their competence speaking skills.

The following are some of the popular Apps which make the ESL learners to enhance their competence in English speaking.

APP 1: TALK ENGLISH STANDARD

‘Talk English standard’ is an android app. It is one of the suitable Apps which make one to speak English fluently. It is developed by TalkEnglish.com, which exclusively works for the English learners in developing their communicative skills. There are about 900 lessons and 8000 audio files in this app. The following procedure

- At first, when we get into the app, there displayed some lesson categories such as English Speaking Basics, Regular English lessons, Business English lessons, Interview English lessons, Travel English lessons, Idioms and Phrases, Listening lessons and Extra English Lessons.
- When we click English Speaking Basics, it will lead us to several lessons. There you can know about Grammatical formulas and some basic words like “Do you mind if I+verb”, “Are you into+(noun), “What do you think about (verb+ing) will examples will be displayed.

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- Then if we get into the second one i.e. Regular English Lessons, we can notice that there were plenty of topics such as “College Related Topics”, “Feelings and Emotions”, “Family – Children – Friends” where we can find different situations, for example “Grocery Shopping”, we can see various sentences which are used in that situations will be displayed. Likewise, there are plenty of situations and related sentences.
- In ‘Business English Lessons’, we can find lessons like “E-mail”, “Phone Calls”, “Talking to the Boss”, “Business Trips” etc., where we can find conversations regarding “Telling person you will call them back”.
- In ‘Interview English Lessons’, we can find the Basic questions asked in an Interview other than subject related questions, for example “Why should I hire you?” and there also some tricky answers displayed on screen.
- In ‘Travel English lessons’, lessons such as “Airport”, “Hotel”, “Talking to Strangers” are displayed there. If we click it, we can find some conversations regarding “Making a reservation”, “Asking for Directions”, “At the Counter” with related examples displayed there.
- There were several idioms and phrases displayed in ‘Idioms and Phrases’ with their meanings. In ‘Basic Listening Lessons’, we can notice how to listen to dialogues. If you get into it, we can listen to dialogues in audio mode.
- Then, at last, ‘Extra English Lessons’ which contains “Pronunciation lessons”, “English Grammar Basics” and “English Vocabulary list” which make everyone to learn the Basic Speaking skills in English.

APP 2: ENGLISH SPEAKING PRACTICE

The main aim of this app, is to improve one’s English conversation skills by practicing it with conversation patterns. The examples and the names of the characters make us to enjoy while learning “How to converse in English?”. The following steps are the outline format of the app:

- At first, when we enter into the app, we find three titles such as Beginner English conversation,

Business English conversation and settings and menu.

- When we click ‘Beginner English conversation’, topics like Chat-Small Talk, Daily life and Talking about Favours will be displayed.
- Further, if we click the Chat-Small Talk, it will lead for some specific conversations like Catching up with a friend, Meeting an old friend, Office Rumor and Do you remember will be displayed.
- In the ‘Business English Conversation’, we find Business Trip, Company Related Topics, Dealing with Business Clients and News Related Topics will be displayed.
- There, under each topic we can listen to an audio with the sentences of conversation shown on the screen.
- Then also, there appears quiz for each conversation.
- There is an availability of practicing the conversation by selecting a partner who displays on the screen.
- We can also record our conversation and can play to know at which level we are.

APP 3: ENGLISH CONVERSATION PRACTICE

This app is similar to that of the English Speaking Practice app. There are about 200 English conversations lessons in this app. The listening exercise, the quiz, the conversation practice feature and the recording tool make everyone to have the benefit of practicing English in improving one’s speaking skill. The following topics are found there in this app:

- Trips and vacations
- Eating related topics
- Family and friends
- Talking about kids
- Daily life
- Sports, music and events
- US holiday
- Nature
- School
- Shopping
- Special days
- Work related

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Under each topic, we can find topics for their similar situation. For example, ‘Afternoon Picnic’, ‘Picnic by the Lake’, etc. will be displayed.

COMMON ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS

As these Apps are similar in their structure and method, but there are difference in features and functioning of the Apps. Although the advantages and limitations are same, as follows:

ADVANTAGES

- ✓ These Apps are all free of cost which help one to learn “How to speak?”.
- ✓ We can listen to the conversation and can also record our voice in order to find mistakes in pronunciation, intonation and stress in all these Apps.
- ✓ Students can easily learn how to converse in a place or in a situation.

LIMITATIONS

These Apps can only be used in online mode. Students may divert from the theme of learning how to speak, as there were advertisements displayed at the bottom of the conversations. Although there is an option of stopping the ads, they may cause diversion in the minds of the learners.

CONCLUSION

There are plenty of Mobile Application software’s (Apps) available for communicating English effectively. But, the researcher finds these application software will surely make an impact on the learners of English as a second language. These Mobile Apps would enhance the competency level of the ESL learners in speaking English, which is the most reputed and wanted skill, to be developed by an English learner in a country like India. The usage of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has grown much in this digital communication era. But for Indian learners, they didn’t have proper awareness about learning through mobile Apps. Mobile phones can also help the students to improve the standard of English – this wants to be injected in the minds of the learners that they can also spoke English fluently. The role of teachers is also necessary for them, in which they are the motivators and guider to make the learners to follow the procedures of the Apps periodically. Thus, this paper, on the whole, emphasizes App based language learning is essential in the field of ELT in this modern era and also this paper

describes how the Apps such as Talk English Standard, English Conversation Practice and English Speaking Practice are used in the field of English Speaking to enhance the competence level of the learners’ speaking skills in English.

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